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THE LITTLE THAT IS GOOD

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Stories of London and Glimpses of English Civilisation

By

HAROLD BEGBIE

Illustrated with Twelve Portraits

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Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is good steadily hastening towards immortality, and the vast that is evil I saw hastening to merge itself and become lost and dead.

WALT WHITMAN

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD
London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne
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To

JOHN KIRK

With heart as young as ever, and soul but gladder grown,
Without one hope defeated, one altar overthrown,
Fresh as your dreamful springtime, to-day you close the door
On fifty years of service to children of the poor.

What's kept your heart so lightsome, what's kept you young,
John Kirk?
Faith in the one great Father, and good, clean, slogging
work?
Yes, but the love that thronged you and cheered you more
and more
In fifty years of service to children of the poor.

The love of men gives courage to pain and thwarted worth,
The love of women sweetens the bitterest draughts of earth;
But younger love you've tasted, more heavenly sweet and
pure,
In fifty years of service to children of the poor.

Their love made glad your springtime, and gave your summer
joy,
Their love brings in your autumn bright-hearted as a boy,
And winter shall not daunt you, nor rob your richest store,
In fifty years of service to children of the poor.

You'll rise the youngest angel that ever leapt from death
To run and draw in Heaven its first excited breath,
And legions there will hail you, whose Heav'n you made
more sure
By fifty years of service to children of the poor.

* * * * *

Accept these tales of London which though they fail in pow'r
To weave a wreath of laurel to crown your autumn hour,
Yet better still shall please you if leading three or four
To happy years of service to children of the poor.

H. B.

PREFACE

So modestly does the Shaftesbury Society pursue the path of social service that few people are aware of the State's debt to its national devotion. The stories which follow, though they show only a part of this many-sided and wide-ranging benevolence, may possibly bring home to the minds of a sympathetic public how profoundly our civilisation is served by this admirable Society.

The stories reveal something of the drama and romance of London life, and they have been written for their intrinsic interest, with no fervour of the proselytiser distorting their facts. But they reveal something of the mystery of the human soul, something of the individual conflict between good and evil, and something also of that inspired devotion which makes men and women give up everything to serve their fellow-creatures.

I presume to say that, revealing these mysteries, the stories in this book may be of service to the State if they succeed in convincing the electorate, before reconstruction has gone too far on the fatal road of mechanical materialism, that the supreme fact of the nation is the spiritual life of the individual citizen.

H. B.

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THE LITTLE THAT IS GOOD

CHAPTER I

A MAN AND HIS AGE

I

In 1885 the Duke of Argyll said in the House of Lords, "The social reforms of the last century have not been mainly due to the Liberal party. They have been due mainly to the influence, character, and perseverance of one man—Lord Shaftesbury."[1]

This Lord Shaftesbury, of whom the present generation is perhaps oblivious, has for the historian of morals an interest not to be matched by many of his contemporaries. Surrounded on every hand by men who played a more conspicuous part on the world's stage, he is, nevertheless, in spite of all his rigidity of mind and all his incorrigible Hebraism, one of the most representative Englishmen of that great epoch. He covers nearly the whole ground of the century. The friend of Wellington and Palmerston, Scott and Southey, Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Fry, he lived to be moved and shaken by the journalistic disclosures of London immorality made by Mr. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. There was scarcely one question of any political importance in that century, from the Indian Mutiny, the Slave Trade, and the Crimea, down to Cremation and Home Rule, with which

[1] It is interesting to record that the present Lord Shaftesbury has just consented to succeed Lord Northampton as President of the Society.

his name is not associated. To read his biography is to read three-fourths of the history of the nineteenth century and nearly the whole history of English philanthropy.

It is a curious truth that the greatest reformer of the nineteenth century was a nobleman, a Tory, and a Churchman. Lord Shaftesbury, it may truly be said, was as far from political democracy as Wellington and Palmerston. He hated demagogues as he hated ritualists. He was as old-fashioned a man as any of his time—so old-fashioned, indeed, that he was as greatly abused by some evangelicals as he was detested by nearly all ritualists. He wept over the departure of feudalism, lived every day more and more in the melancholy conviction that life was going rapidly from bad to worse, hated political changes that touched the construction of society, and believed that the Church Catechism uttered the last word on the relation of the classes. And yet this morbid and sorrowful man, more than any other man of his time, gave political birth to that new instrument in human affairs which we call *social conscience*. It was to Lord Shaftesbury more than to any other man of his age that we owe those tremendous changes in our social organisation which have lifted this country to the first place among the nations—changes, too, it is all-important to consider, which but for him must have been accomplished with all the violence and unsteadiness of a revolution. The full measure of his greatness, obscured by a few personal limitations, obscured even by his goodness, has not yet come home to his countrymen. He stands for us in the shadow of smaller men, his word drowned for us by more strident voices. But those numerous mountebanks and charlatans, quacks and impostors, half-heroes and false heroes who crowd to the front of observation,

and would have men believe that they alone carried the nineteenth century to its triumph, will not survive the scrutiny of the historian.

Anthony Ashley-Cooper, afterwards seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, was born in London on April 28th, 1801, born into a world which had no welcome for him. To be born in a manger, with love making the rafters seem like the arches of heaven, is no hardship; but to be born in the purple, as we say, and to know from the very first moment of birth not one caressing touch of maternal love, this is tragedy. Such was the destiny of this Lord Ashley, son of the sixth Earl of Shaftesbury. From the first dawn of his consciousness he knew this sorrow, was the victim of this crime. And if such child grief afterwards enlarged his sympathies, it seems also to have coloured his mind with a sombre melancholy. His parents showed no liking for him and manifested no interest in his existence. Love of that kind, the purest and most endearing of earthly affections, was never known by him. He was left to the servants. The greater part of his life was spent in open feud with his father. But for the gentle character of the housekeeper, Maria Millis, who had been his mother's maid at Blenheim before her marriage, and who chanced to be a serious, tender-hearted, and pious woman, he might have grown up without any experience of affection and with very little knowledge of religion or morality.

This wretched childhood, which reminds us of stories by Charlotte Brontë, was followed by schooldays which remind us of novels by Charles Dickens. The refined and delicate boy, of a very singular beauty and of a rather shrinking temperament, was sent at the age of

seven to a school in Chiswick, which was in every respect characteristic of that barbarous period. It was a school of brutality and beastliness. "The memory of that place," he said in his old age, "makes me shudder; it is repulsive to me even now. I think there never was such a wicked school before or since. The place was bad, wicked, filthy; and the treatment was starvation and cruelty." After five years of this torture he went to Harrow, and for the first time in his life knew what it was to mix with gentlemen and to live with some degree of comfort. He accuses himself of idleness, but got to the sixth form, and left at the age of sixteen. After two years with a clergyman in Derbyshire, where he was sent to be out of the way of his parents, and where he rode a good deal and indulged a little in boxing, he went up to Oxford, meeting Pusey there and greatly respecting him—a respect which continued to the end of his life. He took honours, to his considerable surprise, and at the age of twenty-five, as Viscount Ashley, entered the House of Commons.

We find this young man writing in his diary on April 17th, 1827:

> I have decided in my own heart that no one should be Prime Minister of this great country unless deeply imbued with religion; a spirit which will reflect and weigh all propositions, examine each duty, and decide upon the highest; be content to do good in secret, and hold display as a bauble compared with the true interests of God and the Kingdom; have energy to withstand political jobbing, and refuse what is holy as a sacrifice to faction.[1]

This early conviction of religion as the supreme truth

[1] "The Life of Lord Shaftesbury." By Edwin Hodder. Vol. I., p. 63.

of existence was derived from Maria Millis, the housekeeper. "It was her hand," says Lord Shaftesbury's biographer, "that touched the chords and awakened the first music of his spiritual life." In her will (and she died while he was at his first school) this good woman left him her watch, and to the day of his death he always carried it with him. "That was given to me," he would say, "by the best friend I ever had in the world." Throughout his long life, especially in times of sorrow or suffering, he would find himself instinctively addressing the Almighty in simple words taught to him as his first prayer by this faithful servant—the Peggotty of his history.

Whatever we may be disposed to think of Lord Shaftesbury's theology (and theology, let us remember, must of necessity, like all other human sciences, partake of the spirit of the times, and suffer from all the limitations of those times), certain is it that, expressed as religion in the daily life of the man, it gave a lofty grandeur to his soul, enriched his mind with the highest conceivable longings, and enlarged the sympathies of his heart to a degree which affected the conscience of his nation, and, giving a fresh impetus and a new direction to political evolution, enormously increased the happiness of the human race.

"On my soul," he wrote in his diary in 1828, "I believe that I desire the welfare of mankind." The first conscious idea of serving his fellow-creatures had come to him as a schoolboy at Harrow, on a day when the ugly sight of four drunken men carrying a cheap coffin to the grave, with no mourners following the friendless dead, touched his heart and roused his indignation. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "can this be permitted, simply because the man was poor and friendless?" And

then and there he determined "that with the help of God he would from that time forth devote his life to pleading the cause of the poor and friendless."

But it must be confessed quite frankly that there was something morbid and egotistic in the theology of Lord Shaftesbury, just as there was something incorrigibly feudal in his politics. The triumph of the man lies in the victory of his love and charity over these faults and limitations of his temperament. Regarded as a theologian alone, we should find in him no more interest than the present generation finds in Baxter or Thomas Adams. His diaries, full of supplications to God and full of self-upbraidings, would drive most men to the healthful self-respect of Walt Whitman. And so with his politics. He is constantly *difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti;* every change is an advance to perdition; nothing can save the country, nothing can prevent the ruin of the world; it would seem that he was not only entirely oblivious to the very idea of creative evolution, but actually unconscious of his own great work for human betterment. And for physical science he had all the distrust and contempt of the bigot; those convictions of science which squared with his theological opinions represented "true science," to which he paid his tribute and lent his patronage; but those discoveries of science which did not square with his theological opinions were denounced hotly enough, and held up to the derision of Exeter Hall. In the three volumes of his biography the name of Darwin never once occurs, and Huxley and Tyndall are mentioned only to be dismissed with contumely.

Nevertheless, this melancholy man, whose sombre mind was filled with ideas of God as dark as Calvin's, had so

human a heart that his theology was converted by his life into a religion which was as beautiful as it was persuasive and reasonable. Let us, who think we have a truer theology than the Victorians, reflect that this theology of theirs inculcated certain mechanical duties of religion which made for great realism in daily life, and disciplined the human spirit in a manner which was of eminent service to mankind. It should at least moderate our judgment of Victorian evangelicals to remind ourselves that the wonderful passion of philanthropy which fired the life of the last century came from the most enlightened of these very people. It was not a political party, but a body of realistic Christians who gave England her first clear knowledge of social reform and social unselfishness.

One of the great virtues of religious life is the habit it induces of watchful self-discipline. A man who seriously holds his existence at the hands of God, and who earnestly desires to attain the full perfection of spiritual life, is saved from the danger of moral stagnation and is assured of growth. Such a man is prevented from torpor and satiety by a sense of duty more effective than a code of rules. He is saved from egotism and self-satisfaction by an ideal holiness, the constant contemplation of which graces the soul with humility. He studies to be courteous, to be just, to be tolerant, to be kind. He corrects every disposition of his nature which tends to vulgarity, conceit, hardness, and selfishness. He is always on guard over himself. He is always in touch with reality.

II

LET us now endeavour to form some picture of the England into which this Lord Shaftesbury was born to change

its whole way of life and to renew a right spirit within it.

To begin with, it was an age of the watchman and the stage-coach, of riot and drunkenness, of ignorance and squalor, of dirt and disease, of selfish individualism and frank brutality. There was no police force, no national schools, no sanitary science, and no justice for the poor. It was not only a dark and ignorant age, it was a cruel age.

The idea that agricultural life was prosperous in those days of the Corn Laws is false. No man was worse housed than the peasant; and much of the field work was performed, for the sake of cheap labour, by slave-driven children. In many counties, we find, children were organised in gangs to do the work of the field. "At a rapid pace," says Mr. Hodder, "they are driven long distances to the scene of their labour; the little footsore and weary children, not more than six or seven years of age, being dragged by their elders and goaded on by the brutal gangsmen. Year in, year out; in summer heat and winter cold; in sickness and in health; with backs warped and aching from constant stooping; with hands cracked and swollen at the back by the wind, and cold, and wet; with palms blistered from pulling turnips, and fingers lacerated from weeding among the stones; these English slaves, with education neglected, with morals corrupted, degraded and brutalised, labour from early morning till late at night, and, by the loss of all things, gain the miserable pittance that barely keeps them from starvation."

He tells us of the amusements of the people: "There was universal rioting and carousal at Easter and Whitsuntide. Fairs and wakes were the popular resorts; drunkenness was the great prevailing vice; unchastity was

fearfully prevalent; and low-class dancing saloons, and still lower-class cheap theatres, were largely frequented." Public executions were reckoned an entertainment by high and low. Over-eating and over-drinking were general. Temperance, indeed, is one of the very latest of our acquired virtues.

As late as 1877, Henry James, a firm admirer of England, noticed people in London "who bear the distinctive stamp of that physical and mental degradation which comes from the slums and purlieus of this dustiest of modern Babylons—the pallid, stunted, misbegotten, and in every way miserable figures. These people swarm in every London crowd, and I know of none in any other place that suggest an equal depth of degradation." He noticed, too, the universal prevalence of drunkenness, and described an incident which he witnessed at Epsom on Derby Day, when a young man tumbled dead drunk off a coach occupied by "a party of opulent young men . . . accompanied by two or three young ladies of the kind that usually shares the choicest pleasures of youthful British opulence—young ladies in whom nothing has been neglected that can make a complexion superlative."

Drunkenness, indeed, was the common vice of the nation far down into the nineteenth century, and the amusements of all classes were for the most part of a coarse or brutalising nature. There was no real sense of an English culture, no general enthusiasm for learning or refinement, and precious little respect for religion as a serious reality. Thackeray was an admirable interpreter of Victorian society, and the character of the mob may be gathered from his great contemporary, Charles Dickens. There was a brutishness in that age which was savage and barbarian. There was also among religious people,

particularly among evangelicals, a deadness to enthusiasm, an overriding selfishness as regarded their private interests, an almost illiterate ignorance, and in many cases a very horrible hypocrisy which, while it brought the Tractarian movement to birth, disgusted large masses of the nation with religion, making the very name contemptible.

Something of the spirit of that age, its want of humanity as well as its want of decency, may be seen in the treatment meted out to lunatics, the first reform to which Lord Shaftesbury laid his hand:

> In the early part of the present century (19th) lunatics were kept constantly chained to walls in dark cells, and had nothing to lie upon but straw. The keepers visited them, whip in hand, and lashed them into obedience; they were also half-drowned in "baths of surprise," and in some cases semi-strangulation was resorted to. The "baths of surprise" were so constructed that the patients in passing over a trap-door fell in; some patients were chained in wells, and the water made to rise until it reached their chins. One horrible contrivance was a rotatory chair, in which patients were made to sit and were revolved with a frightful speed. The chair was in common use. Patients, women as well as men, were flogged at particular periods, chained and fastened to iron bars, and even confined in iron cages.[1]

But the greatest condemnation of that age is to be found in its treatment of children. It is almost inconceivable to men of this generation that one single Englishman could have been found, half a century ago, content to inhabit a country where such an abominable slavery was

[1] "Lunacy: Its Past and Its Present." By Robert Gardiner Hill, F.S.A. p. 1.

inflicted upon the most defenceless and innocent of creatures. But what must we think of that age when men such as Cobden and Bright actually stood forth to defend this iniquitous state of things, and when he who assailed it was furiously and contemptuously denounced not only by newspapers like the *Morning Post*, but by such as Carlyle and Harriet Martineau, while a man like Gladstone never once supported him and on occasions voted against him?

In his diary of 1843 Lord Shaftesbury writes bitterly:

> A grand oration by Gladstone at Liverpool in favour of Collegiate Institutions and education of middle classes. The papers bepraise him, his eloquence, his principles, and his views. Well, be it so; there is no lack of effort and declamation in behalf of fine edifices and the wealthier classes; but where is the zeal for ragged pinmakers, brats in calico works, and dirty colliers? Neither he nor Sandon (how strange!) ever made or kept a house for me, ever gave me a vote, or ever said a word in my support. (Vol. I., p. 444.)

But it was also the same with evangelicals and the Church in general. Again and again he complains in his diary of this religious indifference to the cause of humanity:

> I find that evangelical religionists are not those on whom I can rely. The Factory Question, and every question for what is called "humanity," receive as much support from the "men of the world" as from the men who say they will have nothing to do with it! (Vol. I., p. 300.)
>
> To whom should I have naturally looked for the chief aid? Why, undoubtedly, to the clergy, and

especially those of the trading districts. Quite the reverse; from them I have received no support, or next to none. (Vol. I., p. 325.)

The conditions which he sought to reform are described by his biographer with a restraint worthy of an historian, but difficult to understand in a contemporary; Mr. Hodder, indeed, like his hero, had nothing in his nature of that furious indignation and veritable agony of soul which inspire the authentic revolutionist. But even as it is written in this book, the indictment is grievous enough:

. . . it had been found that thousands upon thousands of poor children were engaged in trades, in many instances dangerous and hurtful, in which they were employed through fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen hours of daily relentless toil. Some of the lace-mills about Nottingham were open all through the night, and the children were detained, in order to be ready when wanted. It was in evidence that they were found lying about on the floor, weary and exhausted, waiting for their turns to come. Similar cruelties were practised in other trades—in the silk manufacture, for example, little girls of tender years, of eight, of seven, and even of six, were employed in arduous labour for ten hours a day. Some of the children were so small that they had to be placed on stools before they could reach their work. (Vol. I., pp. 321-2.)

A horrible traffic had sprung up; child-jobbers scoured the country for the purpose of purchasing children to sell them again into the bondage of factory slaves. The waste of human life in the manufactories

to which the children were consigned was simply frightful. Day and night the machinery was kept going; one gang of children working it by day, and another set by night, while, in times of pressure, the same children were kept working day and night by remorseless task-masters.

. . . Under the "Apprentice System," bargains were made between the churchwardens and overseers of parishes and the owners of factories, and the pauper children—some as young as five years old—were bound to serve until they were twenty-one. . . . Sick with aching backs and inflamed ankles from the constant stooping, with fingers lacerated from scraping floors; parched and suffocated by the dust and flue—the little slaves toiled from morning till night. If they paused, the brutal overlooker, who was responsible for a certain amount of work being performed by each child under him, urged them on by kicks and blows. (Vol. I., pp. 137-9.)

Of Lord Shaftesbury's efforts to ameliorate the lot of these children, Charles Dickens wrote in 1838:

With that nobleman's most benevolent and excellent exertions, and with the evidence which he was the means of bringing forward, I am well acquainted. So far as seeing goes, I have seen enough for my purpose, and what I have seen has disgusted and astonished me beyond all measure. I mean to strike the heaviest blow in my power for these unfortunate creatures. . . . (Vol. I., p. 227.)

The lot of children employed by chimney-sweeps was even worse. Mr. Hodder tells us how

. . . children of a suitable size were stolen for the purpose, sold by their parents, inveigled from the workhouses, or apprenticed by Poor Law Guardians, and forced up narrow chimneys by cruel blows, by pricking the soles of the feet, or by applying wisps of lighted straw. The food and lodging of these children (some of them girls); their sores and bruises; their peculiar diseases; the occasional death of some of them from suffocation; the physical and moral ruin for life of the survivors—all this was set forth for the benefit of Parliament, and made known to the public in a harrowing article, by Sydney Smith, in the *Edinburgh Review*. (Vol. I., pp. 295-7.)

Children were employed in mines and collieries:

A very large proportion of the workers underground were less than thirteen years of age; some of them began to toil in the pits when only four or five; many when between six and seven, and the majority when not over eight or nine, females as well as males. (Vol. I., p. 412.)

Let the reader who would know the full depth to which inhumanity can descend turn to these pages in Mr. Hodder's book, and he will agree with that careful biographer that "it would be incredible, were not the testimony overwhelming, that, in the most Christian and civilised country in the world, such enormities could have been permitted." The most Christian and civilised country in the world!

But there were thousands of children at that time who, escaping the horrors of the mine, the chimney, the factory, and the field, lived infinitely worse than domesticated animals. Through the first of Ragged Schools, Lord

Shaftesbury became acquainted with these veritable arabs of the London streets, 30,000 of them, "naked, filthy, roaming, lawless, and deserted children." He studied them, and brought the fact of their existence before the House of Commons:

> It has only of late been discovered that they constitute a numerous class, having habits, pursuits, feelings, customs, and interests of their own; living as a class, though shifting as individuals, in the same resorts; perpetuating and multiplying their filthy numbers.

Of 1,600 of these homeless London children who had been catalogued and examined, 162 had been many times in prison; 116 had run away from home, chiefly because of ill-treatment; 170 slept in lodging-houses—"nests of every abomination that the mind of man can conceive"; 253 lived altogether by begging; 216 had neither shoes nor stockings; 280 had no headgear; 101 had no linen; 219 never slept in beds; 68 were the children of convicts; 125 had step-mothers; 306 had lost either one or both parents.

> Many of them retire for the night, if they retire at all, to all manner of places—under dry arches of bridges and viaducts, under porticoes, sheds, and carts; to outhouses; in sawpits; on staircases; in the open air, and some in lodging-houses. Curious, indeed, is their mode of life. I recollect the case of a boy who, during the inclement season of last winter, passed the greater part of his nights in the iron roller of Regent's Park. He climbed every evening over the railings, and crept to his shelter, where he lay in comparative comfort. Human sympathy, however,

> prevails even in the poorest condition; he invited a companion less fortunate than himself, promising to "let him into a good thing." He did so, and it proved a more friendly act than many a similar undertaking in railway shares. (Vol. II., p. 256.)

To save these children for humanity became the master passion of Lord Shaftesbury's life. He fought for no other reform with the same tenderness. In no other interest did he let his feelings have fuller play. For the most part he was a sober and reflecting reformer, stating every case he presented to the Commons or the Lords with the moderation of a practical man, never becoming rhetorical, never breathing one word of violence, seeking always to convert men of affairs to the reasonableness of his views. But the waste of child life which prevailed at that time profoundly stirred his deepest emotions; he became not only their advocate before the world, but went down into the kennels of the city to minister to their needs.

III

"If my life should be prolonged for another year, and if, during that year, the Ragged School system were to fail, I should not die in the course of nature, I should die of a broken heart." (Vol. III., p. 480.)

These words, spoken by Lord Shaftesbury in 1880, proclaim clearly enough that devotion to poor children was indeed, as I have said, the master passion of his life. He saw that to promise permanent results all domestic reform must begin with the child, and that the greatest thing to attempt in the child was the formation of moral character. He swept on one side the stern logic of that

brutal age which clamoured for the hardening process, and advocated the supreme principle of the Christian religion. He believed with all his heart and soul in the political value of sympathy. He perceived that for want of this human sympathy the fabric of English civilisation was in peril, as indeed it was, and as indeed it continued to be down to the autumn of 1914. To begin the life of every child in the State with kindness and love, to establish in those children the foundations of morality and religion, this was not only the shortest of all ways to a better order of things, but the chief method by which anarchy could be averted.

We must remember that in their beginning these Ragged Schools were attended by adults as well as by children. But to Lord Shaftesbury the savage men who came in their pitiful rags to learn the alphabet were rightly regarded as children, the neglected children of the State. We must remember, too, that the Ragged Schools of those days were conducted under the very greatest difficulties, and that a high degree of courage was demanded of their devoted teachers. A few extracts from the *Life* of Lord Shaftesbury will give us some idea of the prevailing conditions:

> I have seen men of forty years of age and children of three in the same room—men the wildest and most uncouth, whom it was considered dangerous to meet, and perhaps it would be dangerous to meet them in the dark alone, but in that room they were perfectly safe. I saw there thirty or forty men, none of them with shoes or stockings on, and some without shirts—the wildest and most awful looking men you can imagine. They all sat in a ring, and the only other

human being in the room was a young woman of twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, and, allow me to add, one of the prettiest women I ever saw. She was teaching all these wild, rough, uncouth creatures, who never bowed the head to any constable or any form of civil authority, yet they looked on her with a degree of reverence and affection that amounted almost to adoration. I was greatly alarmed, and, going downstairs and meeting the superintendent, I said, "My good fellow, I don't like this; there she is among all those roughs. I am very much alarmed." "So am I," he said. "Then, why do you leave her there?" I asked. He replied: "I am not alarmed from the same reason that you are. You are afraid lest they should offer some insult to her, but what I am afraid of is this, that some day a man might drop in who, not knowing the habits of the place, might lift a finger against her, and if he did so, he would never leave the room alive; he would be torn limb from limb." So great was the reverence that these lawless and apparently ungovernable creatures paid to the grace and modesty of that young woman. (Vol. III., p. 473.)

I could tell you some wonderful tales about these rescued lives. The story of the Ragged School is the story of the greatest triumph of modern times. I have seen the most startling development of heroic virtue, the most cheering evidences of the Grace of God, in these poor creatures struggling into the light. They make the best of all converts, and it seems to me the Lord interposes with more grace in behalf of the utterly destitute and hopeless than He does with any others. I remember one night at the George Yard

Ragged School. A magic lantern had been purchased to interest the poor things, and I went down to have a talk with them, as a series of slides, representing the Crucifixion of our Lord and the attendant circumstances, was to be exhibited. There were about four hundred people in the room, and the police told me that between four and five hundred were turned away. The interest in the pictures was intense, and I shall never forget their earnest, excited faces, as the scenes in the sacred drama passed before them. The last picture represented our Lord standing beside a closed door, and the text at the foot of the picture was "Behold I stand at the door and knock." The effect was startling; it seemed to bring the story home to every heart, and when I said, "What you see there is going on at the door of every house in Whitechapel," they were moved to tears (and the eyes of the old Earl filled and his voice faltered as the scene came back to him again). It was a revelation to them, and when I told them that, if they would throw open the door, He would "come and sup with them," there was something so cosy and comfortable to them in the idea of it that they came pouring round me and thanking me. Poor, dear souls! They do not care much for churches and chapels and the outward forms; they like their religion to be cosy; it fills them with hope of what may some day be their lot, for now they have no comforts in their lives. I wonder how it is they do not die of despair! (Vol. III., pp. 470-1.)

Charles Dickens has left us an impression of these Ragged Schools:

The Little that is Good

I found my first Ragged School in an obscure place called West Street, Saffron Hill, pitifully struggling for life under every disadvantage. It had no means; it had no suitable rooms; it derived no power or protection from being recognised by any authority; it attracted within its walls a fluctuating swarm of faces—young in years, but youthful in nothing else—that scowled Hope out of countenance. It was held in a low-roofed den, in a sickening atmosphere, in the midst of taint, and dirt, and pestilence; with all the deadly sins let loose, howling and shrieking at the doors. Zeal did not supply the place of method and training; the teachers knew little of their office; the pupils, with an evil sharpness, found them out, got the better of them, derided them, made blasphemous answers to Scriptural questions, sang, fought, danced, robbed each other—seemed possessed by legions of devils. The place was stormed and carried, over and over again; the lights were blown out, the books strewn in the gutters, and the female scholars carried off triumphantly to their old wickedness. With no strength in it but its purpose, the school stood it all out and made its way. Some two years since I found it quiet and orderly, full, lighted with gas, well whitewashed, numerously attended and thoroughly established. (Vol. I., p. 484.)

Lord Shaftesbury, who was surrounded by souvenirs of his adventures in London slums, liked to point his visitor's attention in particular to two photographs:

Just look at these portraits; they have rejoiced my heart more than I can ever tell. I am more delighted than if I had become possessed of half the kingdom.

There is a strange story connected with these portraits. Years ago, late at night, there was a knock at the door. There was nothing very unusual about that; but, somehow, it attracted my attention more than usual, and I remember wondering who it could be, and what the business could be about. Presently, I heard the loud and angry voice of a man in altercation with my servant. I felt then—and I recall the feeling vividly at this moment—a strange inward prompting that it was my duty to go and see what was the matter. There was a man with a little child in his arms which he was endeavouring to thrust into the arms of my servant, who, of course, would not take it. "What is this all about?" I asked. The man turned to me, and said: "Lord Shaftesbury, I have brought this child to you. I don't know what else to do with it. I cannot trust myself to be its father, and I cannot abandon it altogether." The man's importunity would brook no denial; his appeal was very touching, and I felt I could not dismiss the case. I let the man come in, and took down from him all particulars, and the end of it was that the child was left with me. I did not know very well what to do with the poor little thing, so I had her sent to an inn close by for the night, and the next day, when the landlady of the inn brought her back, Miss Rye happened to be here. She undertook to find a home for the child, and, sure enough, before very long a lady who visited the Home in which she was took such a fancy to her that she adopted her. And that portrait of the fine lady is the portrait of what that little ragged destitute child has developed into. I shall never forget that night when she was left at this house. I feel as convinced

that I was moved to do what I did by our Blessed Lord as if I had seen Him in person and heard His voice. (Vol. III., pp. 471-2.)

One danger alone threatened this devoted movement—the danger that Ragged Schools might become respectable. Lord Shaftesbury never ceased to warn his followers against this danger, and to the end of his life protested that his business lay in the gutter. "I was received," he writes of Commemoration Day at Oxford in 1841, "with courtesy, and nothing more; my popularity, such as it is, lies with a portion of the 'great unwashed'":

> You must keep your Ragged Schools down to one mark; you must keep them, as I have said a hundred times, and until I carry my point, I shall say a hundred times more, in the mire and the gutter, so long as the mire and the gutter exist. So long as this class exists, you must keep the schools adapted to their wants, their feelings, their tastes, and their level. I feel that my business lies in the gutter, and I have not the least intention to get out of it. (Vol. II., p. 410.)

IV

LORD SHAFTESBURY, his biographer assures us on more than one occasion, could appreciate a good joke; but he almost totally omits to supply us with examples. There are two entries in the diaries which are amusing, and perhaps characteristic, but they certainly do not illustrate a cheerful character:

> At conference I made a longish speech on various points which the *Times* reduces to this: "Lord S.

said that the children ought to be treated with justice and kindness"; and shortly after, Mr. Sturge is made to say, in the same amount of words, that "he could not agree with Lord S."!!

Sir S. Northcote moved a vote of censure in the House of Commons, which is *milk and water*. Simultaneously, Lord Salisbury moves one in House of Lords, which is all of it *gin and bitters*.

The main impression he makes upon us in this biography is one of a very earnest man consciously holding his life at the hands of God, and deeply sensible of his own moral responsibility. He never ceased to be a gentleman, and never began to be a revolutionist. He went among the poor as a nobleman. Their sufferings pained him, their wrongs troubled him. But great as were those sufferings, and monstrous as were those wrongs, he never moved one inch towards violence for a remedy. Attacked by his own class, derided by almost all those sections of society which his devotion saved from political upheaval, he never once flattered the mob, and never once dreamed of putting himself, as he so easily might have done, at the head of an insurrection. He was the England of the nineteenth century, that century which settled many political questions without violence, which advanced ahead of all the other nations along the constitutional road, which felt its way gradually to a better condition of social existence, and which was not ashamed of rather quesionable compromises so long as it avoided the least risk of anarchy.

The private life of this man was never long out of shadow. The estrangement from his father pained him deeply. He was harassed to his life's end by mortgages

and debt. The extraordinary beauty of his married happiness was clouded over by the death of several of his children, and finally by the death of the wife who shared his faith and strengthened his devotion to the poor. His old age was a great darkness, only lightened by the love of his children and by work for God. He never, I think, reflected upon the meaning of those words, "One soweth, and another reapeth." It is, indeed, a help, as Forbes Robinson wrote to one of his friends, to realise the continuity of work: "We enter into the work of many a man who has passed away, and who, while he worked, often despaired and thought that he was achieving nothing."

Sir William Herschel, describing Lord Shaftesbury's appearance at the funeral of his old friend Alexander Haldane, gives us a picture of the man which is something more than pathetic, and which is almost a chapter in his biography:

> I had never seen Lord Shaftesbury, but knowing his unremitting intercourse with your father, I was prepared to see strong traces of grief on a face which I knew showed habitual melancholy. But when I raised my eyes across the open grave, and for the first time saw the thin figure opposite me, I was startled by the picture of misery that met my sight. I could look at nothing but the living face of sorrow for the dead, the deep downcut lines, the hair blowing about the bare head, and the eyes hard closed at times. The meaning of it, more than the features which conveyed the meaning, was what startled me so; to see such sharp pain for a personal loss in spite of such mature faith. I never saw anything like it in any human face. (Vol. III., p. 450.)

We may be certain of this that Lord Shaftesbury's temperament, which was by nature melancholy, and of whose incurable pessimism he occasionally complains in his diary, prevented him from realising the full extent of his services to the human race. He was so persuaded the world was falling into ruin, that he forgot the parable of the mustard seed: so entirely dead to the scientific spirit that he could not perceive the gradual processes of creative evolution. But the man's work was greater than the man. And, "no work is lost." He invigorated the whole life of his generation, did something to change its heart, hastened more than any man of his time the coming of a better age, and prepared the way for less timorous reformers. These things alone are a great achievement; but in achieving them he himself alleviated the sorrows of thousands and tens of thousands of mankind. He was not only a political reformer. He spent himself in the service of the most friendless and unhappy of his fellow-creatures. "God gave him," as he said of Charles Dickens, "a general retainer against all suffering and oppression."

It is curious that a man whose life lent itself so easily to the commemorative Victorian idea of a frock-coated statue should be memorialised by the most beautiful work of art in the streets of London—that exquisite fountain in Piccadilly Circus, with its beautiful lettering, from which clear water is always flowing, and round which the flower-women gather with their baskets of lovely colours.

Let us now, having glanced back at an age which seems, even to old people, far behind us, but which in truth is the yesterday of our civilisation, go a pilgrimage through the London streets of to-day, stopping every now and then to ask ourselves whether we do not still need,

and as greatly as our fathers, the spirit of Lord Shaftesbury.

We are at the birth of a new world; for this War is in sober truth the tremendous obsequies of the old. With the first dawn of peace, acted upon by Russia and America, a new England must take her place in a new world. To falter, to hesitate, to mark time, will be fatal. The old must be laid aside definitely and gladly, with a full consciousness that the future of humanity is to be more liberal and more joyful. England is no longer the coarse and brutal and almost conscienceless England of Lord Shaftesbury's day, but by no means is she yet worthy of English character—by no means can she call herself Christian England.

THE SEVENTH EARL OF SHAFTESBURY

(From the portrait by Sir John E. Millais, P.R.A.)

CHAPTER II

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SLUM CHILD

BECAUSE it is commonly urged against books which attempt to describe the life of the London poor that they are exaggerated, or, at any rate, one-sided (a charge which is very often true), I begin this volume of London stories with some account of an autobiography written in the form of a novel by one who was born and bred in the slums, and whose authentic narrative seems to me, because of its restraint and its freedom from all literary affections, the most arresting utterance yet articulated by the slowly and painfully ascending multitudes of the London underworld.

To the reader I would profess at the outset my firm conviction that while it is quite possible to exaggerate the criminality and even the degradation of this underworld, it is not possible to exaggerate its unworthiness. As in literature and art, so in sociology; it is all a matter of standards. The boy who loves the poems of Mrs. Hemans will not realise that lady's limitations until he has read a lyric of Shelley or a sonnet of Wordsworth; while the art critic who loses his head over a painting by Paul Gauguin may happily regain his sanity if steadfastly made to confront a masterpiece by Turner. If our standards are low, London may seem the most desirable city in the world; but if our standards—in architecture, in culture, in manners, and in religion—are high standards, then London must shock or distress us at almost every turn, and not only in the slums.

The Little that is Good

But this story which follows will make its own impression upon the reader's mind. He will see that in a neighbourhood which is free from crime there may be little virtue, that in a home which passes for respectable there may be real brutality, and that in lives which are not statistically the failures of civilisation there may be great misery and almost abysmal ignorance.

The title of the book, which was published by Mr. William Heinemann a few years ago, is "One of the Multitude," and its author "George Acorn."

"I was sent to school at the age of three, mainly, I think, to get rid of me, so that the cost of nursing and minding me should be saved, whilst my mother went out to work." In this way George Acorn begins his autobiography. He was born in a quarter of London which has attracted the attention of certain novelists, the degradation of which, many critics assure us, has been exaggerated. In any case, it is a very ugly and forbidding neighbourhood, full of dirty little streets composed of dirty little houses, and broken up by model dwellings which are a model of only what would be avoided by a conscientious architect in search of the social millennium. There are Jews in this neighbourhood, Irish Catholics, and many foreigners. Close at hand is a long, untidy, and most eventful main thoroughfare, noisy with trams, wagons, motor omnibuses, and brewers' drays. An underground railway station in this main thoroughfare is a meeting-place for the bookmaker and his victims, and the pitch of newspaper-boys, flower-sellers, and hawkers of every kind. The public-houses are numerous and rather jovial in appearance; the cinema theatres, also numerous, prefer in their exteriors the signs of gaudiness to those of

joviality; for the rest, the street is one long market-place of shops—big shops and little shops all mixed up together, like the prosperity and destitution of London, before whose windows pass men and women of almost every nationality under the sun, dressed in almost every degree of finery and every degree of shabbiness.

George Acorn, born in one of the foul courts behind this main thoroughfare, tells us that his father and mother were well-meaning people, "who let their children follow the bent of their own desires, and then punished them severely if they did wrong." He goes on to say: "I have always, since I left my mother's arms, had to learn for myself what was right and proper." He gives us at the very beginning a characteristic incident of his home life:

> Every Saturday at tea-time my father would come home morose and sullen, would eat his meat-tea eyeing each morsel of food with drunken gravity, as he hummed snatches of song during a deceptive gaiety. Very often at tea my mother, who was never very patient, would ply him with fierce questions and taunts, to which my father would reply for a time, feebly attempting to stem the torrent of my mother's stinging words—at last taking offence, meeting abuse with abuse until the argument would become a violent quarrel. Cups or saucers were picked up from the table and thrown at each other; then, struggling violently, they would throw themselves to the floor and fight, scratching and punching like wild beasts, until the noise brought the landlady up from downstairs to separate them and enjoin peace. During all of this the baby was crying unheeded on the bed, my brother and I crouched in a corner of the room, too

terriffied to move, or else huddled on the narrow stairs, anxiously straining our ears to catch the sounds. We had only one room, so we couldn't very well go to bed while they were quarrelling, although we were often awakened in what seemed the dead of night by the fighting of our parents.

One such recollection comes to me—of waking with a start with the noise of strife about me, the table pushed over on its side, and my parents fighting without quarter or mercy. My mother's long hair was loose and tangled with blood, her clothes gaping open with rents, whilst my father's face was terribly scratched and bleeding.

The poverty of the family, of course, was very great, and there was often—in fact, every week—considerable anxiety as to ways and means. George Acorn, the eldest son, was early called in to assist when the situation became desperate:

Sometimes I would be sent to some relative or other to borrow a shilling or two, returning very often without cash, but with a large bundle of clothes, saying, "Aunt Sarah says she can't let you have any money, but you're quite welcome to pawn these clothes until Saturday—only make sure you let her have 'em by four o'clock, because Jimmy (a grown-up cousin) is very particular about having his clean things to put on o' Saturday nights."

His distress at this period of his life was mitigated by literature. He seems to have had a natural taste for books, and the library of his first school supplied him, he tells us, with many masterpieces. It was from his reading, and from his reading alone, that he discerned the faults of his

home. He became a critic of his parents. He spoke to them of a different way of living, and made himself mightily unpopular in consequence.

> A kindly society at this time started the Children's Happy Evenings, which gave me nearly all the sweetness that just then came into my life. I have said I assisted the schoolkeeper at odd times, and on these evenings I would help him to lift the heavy desks up on to others (although far beyond my strength), and pile them at one side of the hall. I would then rush home, wash myself, and join in the "happy evening." Those kind people were, and are, doing more real good than perhaps they ever dreamed of. I would here beg them to continue that splendid work, and thank them for the past.

It is a really tragic reflection to think of our myriad slum children realising for the first time from good and gentle people who come and teach them that God is their Father, that their own fathers are everything which God is not.

George Acorn, as I learn from one who knew him, had a naturally quick and impressionable disposition; but although he has written a remarkable book, I doubt very much whether there are not hundreds of thousands of children in London at the present moment who, inarticulate as they are, and may be to the end of their lives, nevertheless suffer as acutely as he did under the stunning revelation that their parents are wicked and that their home life is an absolute mockery of reasonable existence.

Whenever this unhappy child ventured to suggest to his parents a better way of existence, he was, of course, treated as an insolent and ungrateful prig:

One night that I had offended in this way my mother threw a fork at me, which, narrowly missing my cheek, buried its prongs in the door. My mother was in a furious rage, I was comparatively calm. So I drew the fork from its bed, advanced cautiously to the table and just laid it in its place, when my mother flung a perfect fusillade of cups and bread at me, whereat I fled.

My soul rose within me. I determined to be an outcast, and so, fully resolved to leave them for ever, I turned my back on the street and walked about the City for hours. Hunger soon claimed my chief attention, and being by this time quite desperate I stole some red currants from a fruiterer's stall, and ate them with gusto.

Hardly knowing what I did I found myself again near my home. A voice was roughly ordering me to "Come here!" which I identified as my father's, and I promptly turned and ran. My father's voice bade all and sundry to "Stop thief!" so I was caught struggling in the arms of a lanky youth, who thought he was doing me a good turn, as he probably was.

With the air of a conqueror my father dragged me home. The street door was closed, I was knocked down in the passage and kicked and punched, until almost senseless I was allowed to creep upstairs to bed, whilst my mother bewailed her lot in having such a villainous son.'

In spite of his reading he dropped into bad company—that is to say, into the company of street arabs who appear to find relief from the brutality of their parents by practising a lesser brutality of their own in neighbouring courts

and alleys. He learned that his friends would not accept him unless he used, as they did, a very violent language; but he never quite descended to the depths of these companions. He knew that literature was a finer thing than hooliganism. He found a far deeper pleasure in reading than in street violence or any desperate adventures. He was always slinking back to his book. Nevertheless, for a certain period of his life he kept company with juvenile hooligans.

At this time he was fortunate enough to procure a copy of "David Copperfield." He took the book to school with him, fearing to let it out of his sight; and during playtime, he tells us, he sat apart on a flight of steps reading of David's early boyhood until "I began to identify him with myself."

At this time the family was threatened with serious financial trouble. The father was out of work; the mother earned a little bread by making matchboxes:

> When I got home after school I found my father and mother sitting silently facing each other. They had nothing to talk about except trouble, so they remained silent. I suggested reading something, and so, when the other children had been put to bed, I read from my beloved book. And how we all loved it, and eventually, when we got to "Little Em'ly," how we all cried together at poor old Peggotty's distress! The tears united us, deep in misery as we were ourselves. Dickens was a fairy musician to us, filling our minds with a sweeter strain than the constant cry of hunger, or the howling wind which often, taking advantage of the empty grate, penetrated into the room.

But worse trouble was to come. His little brother became seriously ill. It is interesting to read how the unnatural parents grieved over the stricken child:

> Gradually my brother grew worse. Instead of reading, my father and I could only sit and watch my mother as she nursed the child in her arms, trying to still its fitful cries by strange, sweet, soothing invocations.
>
> My mother had never appeared to be particularly tender, and it was a revelation to me, this unfolding of the great, loving, maternal instinct. She would work like one possessed, her dexterous fingers moulding box after box almost too quickly for the eye to follow—and all for a paltry twopence-farthing a gross complete! Of all the foul blots on our civilisation, sweating is surely the blackest. Although her head was bent over her work apparently oblivious of all else, she would start up at the least cry from the ailing child, and rock it to her bosom until she could lay it down, enjoining silence on us all, and then resume her work as if her life depended on it. Saturday—that restful day when ordinary cares relax, and most people have a glorious sense of ease—came with suffering in its train. All Saturday morning I could see by my mother's terrible anxiety that the child was worse. He was engaging all her attention when my father returned with his very scanty wages, perfectly sober. At my father's bidding I cleaned the room as best I could; then asked for some money to get tea and oil with. My mother in a whisper told me not to spend any money. "Every farthing," she said, "was bespoke." So we sat round the cheerless grate

whilst the twilight—such a hopeless twilight—cast a pall over our energy and our very thoughts. The lamp, which was now only burning its wick, was lit, and by its gleams we could see my mother standing and soothing the child in her arms.

Suddenly a look of fear came into her face. She seemed afraid of something; then, bracing herself as if for some frightful task, inclined her ear to the child's mouth. She gave a piercing scream, and whispered brokenly, "My God, he's dead!"

I remember as if it were yesterday the feeling of utter hopelessness that hemmed us in. My father presently returned, divining that something was wrong from the look on my mother's scared face. "Any better now?" he inquired.

"Yes, better now." My mother spoke mechanically, with set white face and great unseeing eyes. "He's dead."

The doctor had refused to come for a couple of hours or so, in spite of my father's urgent representations, and now that he had returned the child was dead. Unemotional man as he was, his frame shook with anguish, and he burst into heart-rending tears. I was far too cold and miserable and hungry to do anything but sit on an old biscuit-box (we had only two or three chairs), staring vacantly into space and gathering like a photographic film impressions of the sorrow around me.

The death of my brother lightened our burdens for a time. Relatives and neighbours—all, to be sure, very poor—vied with each other in doing little things for us; whilst the insurance money enabled my mother to buy some black; and for me a new suit of clothes.

The Little that is Good

He gives us a brief but sufficient exposition of slum theology:

> Our attitude towards religion was that somewhere in the skies was a God, the Father of the human race, and the Maker of the world. To certain favoured individuals He was kind, and provided good food and raiment in return for a regular attendance at church. The people in our street, especially our own family, had been overlooked by God, and it was foolish to expect deliverance from our troubles by any other source than our own abilities. Thus we felt sure that there was a God, but that He was no friend of ours, that it was of no use to depend on Him for anything, and that it behoved us to sharpen our wits and fight the world for what we could get.

Every now and then he opens a neighbour's door and allows us to catch a glimpse of some such incident as this, philosophising upon it for a moment before he goes on with his own narrative:

> The father and mother of a girl I know of were both unemployed, and entirely dependent upon their daughter's wages for sustenance. They drank to excess, and were fighting one evening when she returned from work. The father had his face badly scratched. In retaliation he pulled a red-hot poker from the fire and hurled it at his wife. The girl put out her hand and—stopped it. She could do no work for months because it burned a hole through her hand, and crippled it for life. Nobody was told that it was anything but a "rather unusual accident."
>
> Many a slum-child's scars are inflicted by its parents, scars of the soul as well as the body. These

people lead mechanical lives. It is appalling that so many of our neighbours should go through life without even an elementary knowledge of decent conduct, should live, marry, produce children, fight, quarrel, all by rote, and never think.

A certain conventional set of words constitutes an insult. They feel little or no affront, but take up and carry on a quarrel by means of a conventional harangue which increases in anger and ends with fight. The mind is not used at all; it is simply animal against animal, via conventional routes.

Fortunately for George Acorn, who, in spite of his natural taste for good literature, might very easily have chucked up the sponge and surrendered, if not to the devil, then to heredity and environment, he came at the most formative period of his life under the influence of a devoted honorary worker in the local Ragged School. It is from the widow of this devoted man, the "Godfrey Warden" of the novel, that I have learned some particulars of George Acorn not recorded in his book:

I was gradually induced by my comrades to join a neighbouring Ragged School, and was very fortunate in being placed in Mr. Godfrey Warden's class. Every Sunday evening we stood in queue waiting for the doors to open, whilst the bigger bullying boys would buttonhole us all by turns and demand sweets, or money, or buttons (with which to play), cutting the latter from our trousers if we had nothing else to give. There was a boy named Williams, who was my particular enemy. Although only about my own size, he was able to exercise a remarkable influence over me. At his approach I felt benumbed; often

his actions would work me into a fearful rage, yet I felt powerless to strike him. If he saw me on an errand he would chase me, knowing his power, and laughingly run away when he had cornered me.

Mr. Warden was a common-sense philanthropist, and the fact that nearly all his boys are now respectable members of the community is testimony to his splendid character and wise teaching. I have a photograph of a small group, with Mr. Warden in the centre, taken just outside London—a small group of ragged urchins, smartened up as much as possible for the occasion, all guests of our teacher at his home, where the servants and the silver teapot combined to take our breaths away.

Mr. Godfrey Warden remained our friend for some years after we had drifted out of his class. Several reunions were effected, at which times he would take us to some West End entertainment—ragged boys no longer, but straightforward, clean-living young men.

In one of his letters to Mr. Warden, written in 1911, he speaks of the old days of the Ragged School: "You refer to the pleasure you feel at having had me as one of your scholars. Indeed you taught me much; for one thing the value and power of restraint, for another that there were people in the world who were willing to forgo the Sabbath rest to train and attempt to mould the lives of unruly, undisciplined street arabs, wearing themselves out in the process, without knowing whether the work was bearing fruit or not."

But before Mr. Warden's influence had become supreme in the boy's life it was necessary for him to go out

and get a living. In a few simple words he gives us the memorable account of how many slum boys are launched in life:

> At last the great day dawned. I was simply given three slices of bread-and-butter and sent out at nine o'clock that morning, with the parental injunction not to return without "getting a job."

Thus do thousands and tens of thousands of our slum children begin their lives as English citizens. They leave school with insufficient learning, with no knowledge of a trade, and without help of any kind from the State, and, as in this particular case, with precious little assistance from their parents. They are turned into the streets to find a living.

It is not possible to follow George Acorn's life through all its incidents, all its adventures, and all its sufferings. The book should be read from cover to cover by those who would know how the poor live and how the most heroic of them manage to survive. For our purpose it must serve to record that Acorn went from job to job, picking up a few shillings, holding his own against his employers, and learning as he went along the elements of a trade. So well did he get on, and of such splendid stuff was he composed, that he managed at last to set up in his own business as a cabinetmaker; but times were bad, and in the end he had to go back to the ranks of the wage-earners, this time, however, as a skilled man worthy of his hire.

Then there came a time when he fell in love. He is described to me by the lady whom I will call Mrs. Warden, as a spare man of medium height, dark in colour, with large, contemplative eyes, a subdued voice, and a manner

which was diffident and shy. He would sit in the corner of a room, an obvious artisan, listening to what was said, seldom speaking himself, and never obtrusive. He had a grave smile, and was never heard to laugh. Some burden seemed to press upon his shoulders. He was like one apart, haunted by a secret that none could share, a spectator of the world whose memories prevented him from becoming one of the world; a gentle, silent, and quiet man, one who has suffered and who reflects.

Love brought deep happiness into his life. He determined that he would save his wife, whose class was superior to his own, but who was the daughter of working people, from the contamination of his home. But when he suggested taking a room for himself he was met by upbraidings from his parents, who sponged upon his earnings. In order to help his brothers and sisters he agreed to pay his mother seven shillings and sixpence a week, coming to the family daily for his dinner. This arrangement lasted for some time, until an attempt by his father to get more money out of him (he was saving up to get married) led to an explosion and, finally, to a separation.[1]

He was happy in his room, happy in his work, and happy in his dream of love.

That which terrifies the working man far more than the thought of death, namely, illness which prevents wage-earning, befell George Acorn at this period in his life. But his illness brought him a friend. There lodged in the same tenement a venerable and most capable lady who devoted herself to the poor, and whose life, had it been

[1] "The dinner was worth about sixpence a day, the washing sixpence per week; the balance of three and sixpence I was not only willing, but anxious to give up towards the maintenance of all the younger children."

told by herself, would surely have been one of the best romances of East London ever written. This old lady, who herself did all the work of her two rooms, was well related, well educated, and well off. She went in and out among the houses of poor people, cheering them, teaching them, helping them. She wrote articles for the serious reviews. She disappeared at times to visit her friends and relatives, but ever came back to East London with gladness and vigour. She was over eighty years of age. Acorn speaks of her as "X," and I will preserve her anonymity. She nursed him in his illness, discovered his remarkable talents, urged him to write the story of his life, and finally brought him into relation with the devoted friend of his boyhood, Mr. Godfrey Warden.

In this final extract from "One of the Multitude" we shall see how great happiness came to the slum boy at the beginning of his married life:

> My life is by no means easy now. Work is either too scarce or too pressing. I am either seriously "undertimed," and therefore underpaid, or else just as seriously "overtimed" for a little extra money.
>
> However, when the day is done I have a place of rest, of which Grace is the queen. It is the dearest spot on earth to me, for it is home.
>
> And that young life for which we are responsible is a source of the purest joy I have known, a cause of thankfulness that, through the failures and mistakes of the past, future lives may be brighter and happier.
>
> I am no longer alone, as the foregoing words have indicated, whilst over and above all I am conscious of the abiding presence of God.
>
> Looking back, I see many obstacles surmounted,

tangled paths made straight; looking forward, I see a rugged path along which bloom a few rare flowers that make the path well worth the treading, though the way be rough at times.

He wrote a second novel, called "The Driving Force," in which he studied the influences of heredity and surroundings, emphasising the power of man to choose and decide.

Let me tell the end of the story.

Acorn was helped by Mr. Warden to get work as a cabinetmaker in one of the largest stores in London. His wages enabled him to move clean away from the slums. He appears to have feared the slums. The shadow of his childhood was like a ghost at his back. To save his wife and his two children from the vileness and degradation of that squalid neighbourhood was one of the strongest purposes in his soul. And yet (here is a mystery of the man's heart) he could not bring himself to make the "clean cut." He moved far away from those twisting alleys, those dark courts, those foul little houses in which every room contains a family; he took for himself, in cleaner air and a more reputable neighbourhood, one of those decent if monotonous villas which the jerry-builder regards as the ideal habitation for an artisan; but he could not bring himself to the point of disowning his parents. Every Sunday, Mrs. Warden tells me, this respectable workman, this author whose book had been greatly praised in some of the chief papers of London, and who now had many friends among the higher classes, took his children to visit their grandparents in the slums. For, although he feared them with

a terrible fear, nevertheless there was such a tenderness in his heart, such a strong pity, such an irresistible sense of filial obligation, that he could not cut even his children from all contact with these dreadful parents.

And this is how the story ends.

He was a good workman, proud of his craft, and quite content to be a workman; he was profoundly happy in his home (being a silent and rather secret man who did not crave for much sympathy, and was not greatly troubled if those nearest and dearest to him failed to understand the depth of his nature or to share his ideals); when war came. He did not immediately enlist. He was married, he had two children, and he was over thirty years of age. But Mr. Warden discussed this matter with him when the War Office was calling for volunteers, and at last George Acorn made his sacrifice. He went without joy, but without bitterness. He was one of those millions who, having no sense of military ardour in their natures, nevertheless made themselves humble parts in the gigantic machinery of war, and went to France for the honour of their country and the hope of a better world. In July of last vear his name appeared among the "Missing."

So George Acorn, born and bred in a London slum, fought his way out of that slum with the help of a little human sympathy, made himself an honourable place in the British commonwealth, and then, sacrificing all his gains, laid down his life for an ideal.

CHAPTER III

CHINA ON THE BRAIN

He came into the room where I sat waiting for him with such a pressure of haste behind him, such a propulsion from bustling excitement, as almost took away my breath and certainly quite scattered every notion I had conceived about him. I had expected from the romantic story of his life, told me a week before, to encounter a slow-moving, austere, and contemplative old man, a saintly old man who would speak laboriously of the great burden which pressed upon his soul, and who would sit for the most part with hands folded, eyes closed, every word of his extraordinary adventure to be gingerly dragged from him.

Instead, there entered the room this swift and hurrying person who gave me the immediate impression of having some enormous joke up his sleeve which he was bursting to work off as soon as possible upon his innocent host. The figure is justified by the fact that my visitor has the appearance of a conjurer. He looks exactly like one of those romantic but rather seedy individuals who turn up suddenly on the sands of Margate or Blackpool, and, setting down their handbags, removing their hats and pulling up their shirt sleeves, announce to all sorts and conditions of men, women, nursemaids, and babies that they are about to begin an entertainment which they had the honour of presenting to Queen Victoria, King Cetewayo and Mr. Gladstone in the year eighteen-hun-

dred-and-something-or-other. When I tell you that this interesting person is in very truth an amateur phrenologist you will perhaps sympathise with this first impression made upon my expectant mind. For, I know not why, there is often a strong family likeness between the conjurer and the phrenologist.

Let me attempt to describe him.

He wore a thin, black Inverness cloak, fashionable with the mashers of the 'eighties, which reached nearly to his ankles. He carried in his left hand a big, shabby and bulky bag, which he lifted to the level of my writing-table and deposited there with a bang. He then threw back his cloak and exposed to my view a long and oldish frock cloak of one colour, a low-cut, double-breasted waistcoat of another, and a very fine expanse of a very stiff shirt-front of the detachable variety surmounted by a thin ribbon of a black tie. His trousers, which, I presume, have never been folded since they were first reached down from their original peg, shone in the firelight with the glow of satin.

All honour, thought I, to these shabby clothes, this cheap raiment, these threads and seams which witness to self-sacrifice and a noble economy consecrated to the service of God. But he interrupted this unuttered apostrophe.

"You ought to see me in my apron," he piped in a high voice, his eyes wrinkled up with fine laughter. "This finery isn't the real thing. Of course, a man looks different in his private clothes. You wouldn't know me if you was to see me in the shop." He was apologising for his fine clothes! He was a little ashamed of such immodest swagger! And yet, so human is he, he was, beyond all question, pleasantly conscious of a *pro tempore* dashing appearance.

The Little that is Good

His head is of a peg-top shape, the dome of it a shiny, bald whiteness, the cheekbones high and broad, the chin peaky. He has grey wings of hair over his ears, a stream of grey hair at the back of his neck, and a ragged tag of grey hair hanging from his upper lip. The eyes are small and baggy, glittering in the midst of much-wrinkled puffiness, with an infinite cheerfulness sparkling from them in every direction. The mouth, under its tag of moustache, is a long line of loving laughter. As for the colour of this cheerful countenance, it is a shade of grey so exceeding pale as to be almost a dead white—one might fairly call it, I think, a Chinese white; and, strangely enough, this man, this born Cockney, this complete and characteristic Londoner, whose story is so essentially bound up with China, has a noticeable likeness to a Chinaman.

He flung off his cloak, rolled it up into a bundle, placed it on a chair, and then, rubbing his hands briskly together, approached the table where he had deposited his shabby bag, addressing me in these words:

"I'm going to begin by giving you a kindergarten lesson. This bag's my museum. It's full of curios—very rum curios too. You'll see. First of all I must explain that I'm deaf—hard of hearing. Deaf but not stupid! I went deaf as a boy. It came about through swimming. We used to go swimming as boys; a lot of little nippers, we were, and one of our games was 'Hunting the Duck.' You've heard of that game? Ah! Well, I was the duck. That's how I went deaf. But first of all I'll show you my museum."

To my bewilderment, the first object to be extracted from this shabby old bag was a burglar's life-preserver, which he first brandished ferociously over his head and

then brought down on the table with a resounding whack. Good heavens, how I jumped! Then followed a shattered stick, the end of which was heavily loaded with lead; this also was used to give a nerve-shattering blow to the table. Then came a number of whips, and leather waist-belts with ominous brass buckles, and murderous flint stones, and a padlock, and a broken barometer, and an old faded card signed in boyish handwriting with the name "John Bunyan," and several dishevelled books, and finally a brown-paper parcel filled with fur.

"Now, before I begin," he said, drawing back a little from this exhibition of his curios on the table, but still regarding these objects with a loving pride, "perhaps you'd like me to tell you something of my early days." He looked up at me, and added quickly: "It's a wonderful story, because it's the story of God's dealing with as big a little imp as ever played pitch-and-toss in the streets of London. We'll come to the curios presently. I shall have something to say about every one of them. There's a tale to each. But first of all we'll begin at the beginning."

By a sign I invited him to be seated.

"You must understand," he said, leaning back in his chair till the front legs were off the floor, and rubbing his hands, as he spoke, up and down the front of his thighs —a habit which, perhaps, explains the cheerful shininess of his nether garments—"that the London of to-day isn't nothing like the London of fifty years ago. It's a different place altogether. Mind, I don't say it's better; I only say it's different. It *is* better in many ways, hundreds of ways, as I'll prove to you presently; but it's still far from being what it ought to be. There's more law, but not enough religion. There's more respectability, more decency, more

kindness; it isn't like the savage place it used to be when I was a boy; the children are better treated for one thing; and the parents are more educated and more sober for another; but it's a dark city as regards the love of Christ. We'll come to that later. Now, as to myself, as to little Joey of the slums (I was always called Joey, and it has stuck to me), I'll begin in this way:

"My father was a gardener, a jobbing gardener; he went about London doing up people's gardens for them; and sometimes he had work, and sometimes he hadn't. He was a sportsman by nature. Nothing he loved more in life than his gun. And that old gun of his often came in handy when we was short of food. Ah, didn't it though! In those days, you must understand, there was fields all round Shoreditch. Lea Bridge was a beautiful place. He often used to go shooting at Lea Bridge. He'd take me with him. We'd get up early in the morning, and start off before anybody was stirring, and walk all the way. He hadn't got a dog, you see, and so that's how he came to take me along with him. I was the dog. Sometimes we'd come home with as many as thirty birds, mostly sparrows, and very useful they were when there wasn't anything else to eat in the house.

"I went to work when I was eight years of age, and about the same time I was sent to Sunday-school. But Sunday-school didn't mean much to me. I was all for the streets. You see, by nature I was daring, venturesome. Why, at twelve years of age I was a little man, a regular little man I was, and strong as a lion. We used to have great fights in those days. Our fun was fighting. We was up to all kinds of mischief, and went in for gambling, but nothing in our estimation came up to fighting. It was street against street. Gangs of boys from one street

would fight gangs of boys from another. Faction would fight faction, just as they do in Africa. And not with fists only. No fear! Why, we used sticks, belts, stones, knives, pistols—anything we could get hold of. You'd hear women screaming from the houses. Policemen daren't come near us. Boys would lie on the ground senseless, with the blood running out of their hair and down their faces. Lots of boys were half killed. A brother of mine was near blinded for life. It was real fighting.

"Lucky for me I was sent to a Ragged School, and though we were rough boys and gave a lot of trouble, still the Ragged School just made the difference to a number of us. It made all the difference to me. I began to think about other things. It took my thoughts off the street. My parents were good parents; they didn't get drunk like a lot of others, and didn't beat us or leave us to starve. But they didn't bother a ha'p'orth about our souls. They never taught us to read the Bible or to pray; never told us anything about God and eternal life. We were dark as heathen; like a lot of savages, we were. The Ragged School altered that. I was working for a chair-maker, and in the evening I'd go to the Ragged School. It did me good. It gave me a little learning, and taught me to think about God. What I thought of Him then I can't remember; but I know I was a bit afraid, for all I was so daring and venturesome. I used to wonder what would happen to me when I died. I wasn't afraid to die, but afraid of what might happen to me after I was dead. And then one day I saw death. I saw it quite close, touched it, and lived with it. It was only a little thing, but there it was—Death! I suppose I was fourteen years of age at the time, and there in our home lay this dead baby, white and still, telling me what death was. I

remember quite well how I crept out into the streets with the thought of this dead baby of ours pressing down on my little brain like a great weight. As I turned a corner of the street one evening I came across an open-air, one of the services held by missioners from the Ragged School. I stopped and listened. The preaching was about Eternity. That word got hold of me. It seemed to me a tremendous big word. I went away turning it over and over. The more I turned it over the bigger it grew, like a snowball. It got so big at last that I felt it would fall upon me, crush me, lay me out flat, smash me all to bits, grind me into powder. I went off to the Ragged School determined to get saved. I knew enough about the matter, kid as I was; and that night I was fairly converted. I gave myself up to God, like a guilty man giving himself up to the police; but in this case, instead of punishment, I received the reward of a changed heart. Yes, from that very moment I wanted to do something for God, wanted to work for Him, wanted to lose myself in serving Him; and, being venturesome and daring, the idea took hold of me then and there that I'd be a missionary. I'd heard about China, and from the moment when I was converted as a boy of fourteen the desire of going to China took possession of me, and it's had possession of me ever since.

"Just about this time there came a change in my working life. One day my father had taken me to Lea Bridge to act as his dog, as per usual. In the public-house—the Greyhound it was called—he met a man who was in the piano trade. They got talking, and presently started looking at me; and the end of it was that I left off making chairs and began making pianos instead. I've been in that trade ever since, and but for pianos I should never have done the little I've done in the way of missionary work. So the

old Greyhound at Lea Bridge is rather a sacred place in my memory, for all I'm a teetotaller; and as for my father's gun, why, it's a part of my spiritual life. You may say I was shot into the way God wanted me to go.

"But I must tell you about my first mission. I started right off in the slums. I had been five years a scholar in my Ragged School, and now I began twenty-five years of teaching in it. I was so grateful I wanted to do something for others. Talk about irrepressible, I was simply bursting with zeal! But teaching in Bible-class wasn't enough for me. I started helping Mr. George Holland in his mission (Lord Shaftesbury thought a lot of him), and then when I was twenty-five years of age I started for myself in a street where no open-air had ever dared to go, and where policemen went only very seldom, and then in twos and threes. It was the worst street in our part, and perhaps the worst street in all London—filled with thieves, harlots, hooligans, burglars—everything bad and bold. I can remember my first sermon in that street. I stood up on a heap of potatoes outside a public-house, for I always believed in bearding the lion in his den, and gave out my text, which was very suitable since it was snowing hard at the time: *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* I had the snow for an illustration and made the most of it. You should have seen the curate's face when I marched into church at the head of a crowd of people fresh from the pubs and from cooking their dinners; he was terrified, absolutely terrified, shaking all over and white as a ghost!

"Then I started a Ragged School of my own. It was a

school only for desperates, fellows like myself. I had to go about the streets collecting it. I came across a lot of young hooligans playing Banker, and stood watching them. 'You'll have no luck while I'm here,' I told them, 'for the devil don't like me.' They shifted away, and I followed them. It was funny how those young hooligans tried to dodge me. I'd pull my scholars out of stables, from under a pony's belly, out of corn bins, and from under sacks. I had to bribe them to come. First I promised a pair of boots and a fine tea if they'd come to school; but this, of course, was only a joke! Then I had a Harvest Festival of old clothes. I went about collecting all the old clothes I could get, clothes and boots, and carried them into the room I'd hired for my Ragged School. That brought a crowd, for most of these hooligans were ragged, and some of them hadn't got any boots to their feet. 'Where are we to sit?' they demanded. I pointed to the folding chairs I had bought. The next minute every chair was in the air, and the boys marching round the room with them, singing a comic song. You never saw such a sight as all those marching chairs. I didn't know what to do, whether to rebuke them or laugh. Well, I laughed; and that made us friends. But we often had rumpuses. There was one of my scholars who was a captain of one of the worst gangs in the neighbourhood; he was a tiger, oh, a regular tiger!—about nineteen or twenty he was, and violent when his blood was up. Phew, you ought to have seen him with his blood up! He started fighting one day in the school, and it got to belts and sticks, till blood was flying all over the place and I thought murder would be done. I had to fling myself on him, and tear him away from the others. But it was often like that. Ragged Schools in those days weren't

tea-parties, I can tell you. No fear. But wait a moment, this brings me to my museum!"

He got up from his chair, and began to handle his curios very lovingly. Every stick, buckled belt, flint, and whip had a tale of some fearful fight connected with it; the card bearing the name of John Bunyan had belonged to one of his scholars in this unruly Ragged School; there was a story for the barometer which I can't remember, a story for the padlock which is hardly worth telling, and as for the packet of fur——

"I shall never forget that night!" he exclaimed, picking up the packet with a broad grin. "One of the boys was employed in a furrier's establishment. Bit by bit he collected all the fur clippings he could lay his hands on, brought them to the school, distributed them among the other scholars, and then at a signal they all started blowing the fur into the air till the whole room was filled with fluff—enough to choke you! But there was always something of that kind. Always a fight or a lark or a booby-trap. We worked among desperate characters. You remember Dark Annie who was murdered by Jack the Ripper in Whitechapel? She used to come to my mission. Yes, I knew her, and a lot like her. I got her to sign the pledge the very Sunday before she was murdered. She wrote her name in my Bible that same night. Oh, we had some terrible characters in those days, but some fine ones too; many an old Ragged School boy became, and still is, a Ragged School teacher. Talk about romance, there's nothing to compare with the Ragged School!"

At this point, with so many other stories to tell, I must interrupt the narrative of Joey, turn my back resolutely upon his museum, and attempt in my own poor words to summarise the chief adventure of his life.

The Little that is Good

Joey worked hard in the piano factory, and worked intelligently. He learned the secrets of the trade, and became in time his own master, himself—this little Ragged School boy—a maker of pianos. But, on my honour, he never worked for himself. He was working all the time for an ideal which had haunted and consumed him from boyhood. In his own words, he was making pianos for God. That is to say, he was slaving away and hoarding his earnings in order that he might go to China as a missionary.

It is a very extraordinary thing this haunting of the slum child by the vast mystery of China. He tells me that he prayed for China every day of his life; that he lay in bed every night thinking of China till he fell asleep. Something seemed to tell him that God wanted him to leave the slums of London and to go wandering in China preaching the Word of Christ. He had no doubt of that.

But when at last, after heroic toil and heroic self-denial, he was ready to set forth, deafness smote him like a rebuke for his effrontery, as much as to say, Who are you, you miserable little Cockney, to think of teaching wisdom in China!

But such is the pertinacity of the true Londoner, and such the quality of this particular Londoner, that deaf as he was he determined to offer himself. At this time he had not become his own master, and was only twenty-one years of age; his savings had been the savings of a working-man. This is how he tells the story of his bitter disappointment. "I went up before Grattan Guinness, of Bow; you know who I mean? Well, he was a smart man, Grattan Guinness was. It took him just two minutes, rather less, to cook my goose for me. Yes, he settled me in under two minutes. Deaf!—how could I

be a missionary? What on earth did I mean by such a thing? It was all over before I quite knew I was outside the door I'd only just gone in at!"

How did Joey bear this disappointment?

"Well," said he, spreading out his arms and wrinkling up his brows, "it was clear to me that God didn't want me to go to China. He wanted me to stay at home. I'd made a mistake, that was all; made a mistake, and now knew it. But I knew something else as well. Ah, no mistake about that! God didn't want me to go to China, but He did want me to work for China. If I wasn't to go I could help others who had sound ears in their heads. And so, knowing I could do well in the business, I set up for myself as a piano manufacturer, and worked like a nigger at it, for the sake of China."

By this he means that he slaved day and night, putting by money, denying himself comfort and enjoyment, in order that he might send missionaries to China. He could not go himself, but he *could* work, he *could* stint himself, he *could* go shabby and threadbare, that others might go. The son and daughter of a neighbouring clergyman wanted to go to China, but could not afford the money for their fares. Joey earned that money for them by the sweat of his brow, and money to keep them in China. Yes, and more than these. "God's blessing was upon me," he says, "and this enabled me to help out nineteen missionaries and pay the passage and outfit of fifteen." And he adds, "I took care that each had a better pair of ears than I possessed, so that I had nineteen pairs of ears at work instead of one pair." Who could have guessed that such a romance as this lay hidden for years in the back streets of London?

While he was slaving for missionaries in China, he was

himself working as a missionary in the London slums. He never allowed his romance, his dream, to hinder his work for the "desperates." That little slum mission of his, which has saved from ruin and despair I know not how many poor Cockney souls, cost Joey about £150 a year.

But he was haunted and tortured all through these years of devoted self-sacrifice by the desire to go to China. He could not get rid of that obsession. He was "fair cracked," as he says, to go to China. And at last, when he had grown grey in the service of Chinese missionaries, he yielded to the master impulse of his life. "Some time before I went," he says, "the Lord laid the burden so heavily upon me to go to China that I felt that if I did not obey the voice within me, I should go out of my mind and into a lunatic asylum, instead of out of England into China; I preferred the latter course."

Of this first journey of Joey from London slumdom to the ancient land of Confucius I have seen no record; but out of his capacious bag, before he departed, he abstracted a printed record of his second journey, made in the year 1904, which he was kind enough to present to me. A few extracts from the pages of this diary may prove diverting to the reader, and give him a further taste of Joey's quality. Few men of greater originality and finer courage ever emerged from the suffocating miasma of a nineteenth century slum.

Some idea of his adventures in China may be got from the following extracts taken at random from his diary:

> This afternoon Lester and I went out in the streets and held an open-air meeting. Lester had some texts written on scrolls, which he gave out, and then

started preaching the Gospel; and then he asked me, so I began to preach, and he interpreted for me. Afterwards he sold many tracts and Gospels, bought by the pence contributed by our Sunday-school at Buttesland Street, and which I sent out last year. In the centre of our stand a man was having his head shaved and his pigtail done up; on the right, another had a lot of bands on a bamboo pole; in front, several boys with baskets of baked monkey nuts; and a soldier also was an attentive listener. Some had hats like helmets, looking more like pirates than anything else; majority with no hats at all, but only their pigtails tied round their heads. We went away thankful that some good seed had been sown. Came across a man, doubled up, begging; Lester dropped him some cash. A man ran after us, and bought the last book we had. We went down to the river-side to arrange for a boat to take us to Wu' Chen.

We arrived in the city about 11 o'clock, and went to a Chinese inn, and had a Chinese meal, which consisted of rice, eggs and bean kurd tea, with a crowd of Chinese looking on with keen curiosity, and a large pig under my stool picking up all the rice that a fowl knocked over by jumping upon our table; a smoky copper in front, where they cooked our meal, with mud floor, and pigs outside raking up all the dirt they could find. After this meal we went and held an open-air service on the mud pathway of a side street, a stone pedestal for a pulpit. I preached to them through Lester; he afterwards did the same. We sold out all our Testaments or Gospels and part of the almanacks. When going along, saw in a shop a man as the devil's medium, shivering and trembling

in convulsions, uttering something in Chinese, and a man writing down all he uttered, which was supposed to be some kind of medicine they could get for their ailments, with crowds of people listening to him. We drew many of these people away by holding an open-air service almost opposite the shop, and sold some more almanacks.

Here we were shown our bedroom; if I said it was like one of our coal-cellars at home, it would come nearer to it. Two old beds were here, with straw and cocoanut matting; on this we spread out our beds, which we had fortunately brought with us. Some tea and rice and fried eggs were brought us on a dirty table, and, as it was dark, they brought a light—a piece of rush soaking in fat, smoking like a paraffin lamp with the glass off. Here we sat down, with about twenty Chinese gazing at us in wonder, and, after giving thanks, began to eat, after telling the onlookers why we thanked our God. After tea we went to the door to satisfy the crowd of natives, and sold some almanacks and Testaments, and then turned into our hut to go to bed. The very surroundings looked as though we were in prison. After fastening our door, we could see Chinese peeping through the fretwork of this shed, looking at the two foreigners going to bed. It was so bitterly cold that, before we could undress and get off our wet and muddy boots and trousers (I was up to my knees in wet clay) we were quite cold, but had reading and prayer, and got into the bed, and put our heads under the clothes, and tried to get some sleep; but neither of us got much of that, although we were very tired.

Went out about 7.15 a.m. for a walk, and had

five dogs fly at me, each one about the size of a wolf; but I showed fight, and threw a piece of bamboo at the leader, and the others kept off. A little farther on I had two more come after me, having heard the other five barking from the farmyard. I turned round in time to throw a large piece of mould at the foremost, and off they went too. Went out on the street preaching and selling Gospels. Many sales. People feeling my hat, hair, coat, waistcoat, tie, collar, cuffs, studs, boots, trousers—in fact, everything they could see, asking how much that cost, and what it was made of. We held an open-air meeting right on the steps of a temple, with two shocking opium wrecks in front of us, like two skeletons. I spoke to about thirty children to-night on Christ as a child, boy, and man. At the adult meeting I preached again on Christ as the Door and Light of the world, Herbert illustrating it by their lanterns, one of which he took from its peg on the wall. This day I have been printing some hymn-sheets ("Jesus loves me") from the typographic machine, and made some new ink without sending to England for it.

One of the entries on his homeward journey lets us into the secret of his hobby:

> This day many of the passengers discovered my knowledge of phrenology, and we had some amusement over it, which helped to break the monotony of the voyage. I have also had some fun with the children, who have quickly taken to me.

Such is the romance of Joey, who was both duck and dog in his childhood, whose parents never bothered their

heads about his little slum soul, and who might have been, but for the Ragged School, one of the failures of English civilisation. When you consider that this child of the slums has not only preached the religion of Christ in Chinese villages where never before an Englishman had penetrated, but that he has also lectured to many audiences all over America and Australasia, you will confess that the story of his life, told with some fullness, would be a telling page in the history of domestic London.

I have no knowledge whether he makes good pianos or bad pianos; but certain I am of this, that wherever young ladies with pigtails down their backs may be now practising their scales upon a veritable Joey pianoforte (one of those instruments which enabled him to keep missionaries in China), marvellously sweet must their music sound in the ears of the angels.

Someone from the slums where Joey was born said to me rather bitterly, and with a passionate gesture, "Joey didn't have no call to go to China to be a missionary; there's plenty of streets here where he might have spent his money. China! China! Why, there's places here where the people are worse than any other people on the face of the earth!"

From which I concluded that this worthy and most logical gentleman, with all his virtues, which I am sure are considerable, has never known what it is to experience a call.

CHAPTER IV

A VOICE IN THE STREET

You will scarcely realise the full wonder and significance of her beauty unless I am able to build up in your imagination a faithful conception of the sty in which this lovely and gracious lady lives, in which she was born, in which she suffered a long martyrdom, in which she experienced the greatest miracle possible to human personality, and in which she still dwells, going about those dreadful streets as a witness to the truth of religious reality.

This dreadful sty has been described by a number of people as the worst quarter of London. It has been called all the names under the sun. For example, "The Queen of Unloveliness"; "the leading criminal quarter of London and, indeed, all England"; "the blackest patch upon the poverty map of London"; "a modern chamber of horrors"; "a dismal jungle of pauperism, vice, and misery"; "an inferno"; "the most criminal place in London"—and so on, according to the taste and temper of the visitor. It has been condemned by Charles Booth and Jack London, by Arthur Paterson and George Sims, by Walter Besant and the *Daily Telegraph*. Dr. Addison, the member of Parliament for this place, has championed it against some of the most outspoken of its critics; but, worthily jealous of its honour as he is, truth forces him to admit that in this deplorable quarter of London there are to be found "many and grievous cases of hopeless

poverty, scores of houses that are a standing condemnation of city landlordism, a great deal of rack-renting, and often of overcrowding and insanitary conditions, which are a disgrace to the local *health* committee."

The other day, walking in this neighbourhood with one of the teachers of its Ragged School Mission, I was taken into a grimy house in a gloomy street to see a man whose tragic fate heavily oppresses the heart of the teacher. This dark street was filled with children whose dirty faces and ragged clothes could not obscure the beauty and happiness which shone from a great many of them; they called to my companion by name, forsaking their skipping-ropes to approach him, standing in front of him, and smiling up into his kindly face. What a reward, the sunshine of those grimy little upturned faces, for all the toil of the teacher! At the open doors of several of the houses stood slatternly young women who gaped at us, grinned at us, and in some cases called after us; one of them—a young Jewess in a sordid and disfiguring dress—had hung in her ears a pair of cherries, which added a strange decorative touch to her remarkable beauty.

We descended the basement stairs of this house, and entered a room so dark that it was difficult to see across it, and so foul in its atmosphere that it was difficult to breathe in it. I do not know that I have ever seen a darker basement, and I am perfectly certain that I have never breathed a more loathly smell. This suffocating reek was presently explained to us by the owner of the room; he earns a few pence by selling firewood, and in front of the few smouldering coals in the grate was a fish-box undergoing the slow and disgusting process of being dried; other fish-boxes scattered about the dark room waited their

turn to be steamed at the fire before suffering dismemberment.

There was no bed in this room, but on the carpetless floor and against one of the dirty walls lay a most dismal disarrangement of thin dark-coloured rugs, on which a dog might have been lying, with no pillow of any kind and no touch of linen from one end to the other. Near the fire and the fish-box stood a shabby old leather-covered chair with one of its castors gone; and by the chair stood a little pale child very unwashed and tattered, who, when my sight became more accustomed to the gloom, I saw to be standing sentry over a very white, small, and silent infant lying prone on the seat of the chair. It was truly not until some minutes after my entrance into this melancholy cellar of a habitation that I discovered on the floor, at the foot of this same chair, two other children, equally dirty, equally pale, and equally silent, whose ages must have been sandwiched in by destiny between the babe in the chair and the little sentry beside it. The silence of those four children struck me at the time as something ghostly and dreadful; it has haunted me ever since. They might have been dolls.

I must not attempt to describe in any detail the face of the man who greeted us in this room. It must suffice to say that such is the havoc of that face, such the awful and repulsive hideousness of it, that no one can be found to work with him; kind employers have provided work for him in out-of-the-way corners of their warehouses, but sooner or later the other workers have said that they cannot stand the sight of him. He is a young man, alert and active, with a determined will such as I have seldom encountered; his enunciation witnesses to the force of that will; it is loud, challenging, and passionately fierce; never

was man less of a whiner. The whole time I was suffocating in that dark room this young father of the four silent and motionless children, reminding me by his attitude of Sam Weller's first meeting with Mr. Pickwick, was polishing with great vigour a black leather gaiter, one of his feet resting on a fish-box, the gaiter laid along the thigh of that leg over his arm. He was in his shirt-sleeves, the shirt open at the chest, and without a collar. Every now and then he would pause in his polishing to raise his head and rap out a determined sentence, but for the greater part of the time his head was bent over his work, the right arm polishing with all its might.

This in brief is his story: He fell in love with an extremely pretty girl, of whose parents neither he nor she has ever been able to find a trace. She lived with a man and woman who received payment for her maintenance. Both the man and the woman objected to the girl's engagement, and the man's objection was of a very violent nature. But the marriage took place, and after the marriage the stepfather's fury waxed greater. On one occasion he visited a public-house where the young man was employed behind the bar, and breaking off a tumbler to its base endeavoured to deal a smashing blow with this frightful weapon at his enemy's face. The young man, to escape his persecutor, moved away to another locality; but the stepfather of his wife found him out, and one day entering the public-house hurled a glass at him with such terrible force that it practically cut away his face. He lay for months in the hospital, and left it without a nose, with his mouth fearfully contorted, with his skin permanently disfigured, and an angry gash right across his forehead.

Later that same evening I sent for the man, or his wife, thinking that I might be of some service to that desperate

family. They both came, and remained with me for some time. At the end of our conversation it was suggested to them that they must be wanting to get back to their children. "Oh," said the man, "that's all right; they're quite safe; we let the fire out before we came away, and there's no light in the room." Try to think of those four little children, in that black and foul-smelling basement, without a fire and without a light on a bitterly cold winter's evening when one was glad of one's overcoat even within the four walls of the Ragged School Mission.

I will describe one other incident of that same day. We were visiting a court in which stands an old house, occupied by I know not how many families, of which the only sanitary convenience is an outside closet at the foot of the stone stairs to the front door, at the side of which is a tap supplying the household with water. As we came out from visiting one of the houses in this court, we encountered in the passage a woman and a young girl who were also leaving the house. This woman was rather handsome in a bold and fortyish fashion; she had pretty golden hair of a dark kind, which seemed to me natural. She was powdered and perhaps a trifle made-up in the matter of lips and eyes. But what chiefly surprised me in her appearance was the smartness of her garments. The girl, who followed a little sheepishly at her heels, was not so pretty and was slightly Jewish in appearance; but she was even more fashionably dressed than the matron, wearing one of those very short skirts which only just escape being taken for aprons, and extremely high-heeled boots which laced up almost to the knee. The woman appeared to be as surprised at seeing us as I was surprised at seeing her. For a moment she gave me a fierce and penetrating look; then, opening her vanity bag, she took out two or three

coppers and distributed them among a few of the children who swarmed on the doorsteps. Amazed to see such women leaving such a fearful house in such a dismal court, I turned to my companion inquiring who and what they were. He gave me a look, and then, before stooping down to speak to the children, he said quickly, "Better not ask."

These two incidents, so different and so striking, will give you perhaps some idea of this black quarter of London slumdom. I have related them, as I said at the beginning, only that you might form some not wholly inadequate idea of the sty in which my beautiful lady lives and has her being.

The very remarkable beauty of this lady is in itself a part of my story. I shall therefore take some pains to describe her. And before making this attempt I would like to point out that one of the greatest witnesses to the truth of religious reality is old age. If you will compare the face of someone who has lived a long life, not viciously, but selfishly, without exercising that divine faculty of the mind which is given to us for the purpose of wonder and reverence, who has lived as most people do live—that is to say, for the things of the present, for social popularity and personal ease—if you will compare the face of such a one with the face of another who has lived quietly and deliberately with the great thought of eternal reality, you will understand what I mean by saying that old age has a spiritual significance. Nay, but if you will compare the serenity, the beauty, and the grave gentleness of one of these contemplative spirits with the face of some elderly man or woman whose whole life has been splendidly given to the mechanism of religion or the breathless activities of

philanthropy, you will see how great is that significance. It is easily explained. The things that we see are the actualities of life: to reach the realities, which are invisible, one must beware of the actualities, must escape from them, must live some part of every day in communion with reality, and in the solitude of worship. The popular bishop is more often than not as far from the kingdom of heaven—that is to say from reality—as the poor sensual wretch whose spirit is suffocated by his flesh. The only difference between such a one and the bishop is that their actualities are different; the sensualist has no mind for, and the bishop no time for, reality.

Her face is of the most delicate whiteness; the wrinkles so fine and threadlike as to be almost invisible. The colour of her eyes, which are very direct and look steadfastly at one, are the blue of a cornflower. She has white hair with a delicate wave rippling through it. The gentle mouth, which has fallen in but a little, is not quite straight, and drags a little on one side, very charmingly. The upper eyelids slant upwards, forming a sharp angle in the centre, a feature which adds great distinction to her face and gives an impression of refinement and intelligence to the soft blue of her eyes.

This beautiful and gracious old lady has the quietest manner imaginable. She never makes use of gesture. Her face never changes its expression. Her voice, which is low with a strange deep ring in it, never becomes loud, and never changes its measured pace. In her presence one is conscious of a deep and profound peace, of a serenity which no accident of time can now disturb, of a sweetness, a purity, and a repose which are like a fifth gospel.

For over thirty years, she tells me, her life was a life of

darkness and sin. She was born in one of the very worst streets in London, and her father was a man who made that home wretched and desperate by his selfish drunkenness. Her mother died of a broken heart soon after her birth, and her father married again, bringing in to the ruins of that home a woman who was almost as bad as himself. Till the age of eighteen the child suffered from the brutalities of her father and her stepmother. But the marriage which came to her at this age as an escape from horror and suffering was destined to be her first real entrance into the heart of hell.

Her husband was a trimmer in an iron foundry, and a man who swiftly developed a most savage disposition. I shall not sicken the reader by relating the full chronicle of this domestic history. Nor do I wish to suggest that all the blame lay with the husband. That is to say, it must not be imagined that his wife at this time was anything like the beautiful old lady whose portrait I have just endeavoured to paint. Indeed the wonder of what I have to relate lies mainly in this: that she was for many years not very much better than numbers of other women in that brutal quarter of the town. Her children, of whom she had eleven, ran wild in the streets. Some of them, I am told on excellent authority—and she agrees with a bow of her head to the statement—were the cleverest thieves of the district. She went to the tavern with her neighbours. She let her house get dirty and squalid. She took no pride in anything, and had no joy in life.

She says of her husband: "He was not kind. He knocked me about, but still not so bad as some. He was a cruel man. He seemed to have cruelty in his blood and in his soul. He had a bitter tongue, and never said one kind word to me after the first week or two of marriage.

And when the great change came in my life, he never helped me. Before that change I used to answer him back, used to contend with him, and, because my soul was dark, I thought I was standing up for my rights. But the grace of God brought light to my soul. I saw that I must be patient, that I must bear everything he said or did, in silence, without murmuring. I learned patience. It was not easy just at the beginning, but much easier than I had thought it would be."

I asked her to tell me how this great change had come into her life, and she told me the story in these words:

"My people were Roman Catholics, so I had some notion about God. But they had not sent me to school or taken the trouble to teach me anything. Still, I did know there was a God, and that after death there was a life of happiness or despair. One evening I was sitting at my open window when a few people from the Ragged School Mission began an open-air service at the street corner. I remained hidden round the corner of the window; I couldn't see the people, but I listened to what they were singing and saying in the street. The sermon was about wickedness. I remember feeling that I was wicked, and feeling how true it was what the preacher said, that wickedness makes people very unhappy. His voice came up from the street, and entered into my window and into my soul. I felt a sad wish that I could be good. I was tired of my unhappiness. I wanted something better in my life. And when the preacher in the street began to tell how he had once been wicked and unhappy, and how God had taken away his wickedness and given him a great happiness, the thought came to me: If God can do it for those people, He can do it for me. I began to think what it meant to renounce sin. I

knew that some of the neighbours who had been bad and unhappy were now quite different since they had gone to the Ragged School Mission. So I thought to myself that I would go to the Mission too, and see whether I could not get rid of my misery. I was very, very unhappy. I went to the Mission, and I went to the Salvation Army. I used to attend the services in the hope that I might get rid of my unhappiness. I prayed for strength to become a Christian. There was no profit, no peace, no happiness in my life. But pray as I did no change came to me. I felt as if it was no use trying, and yet something seemed to make me go on. I had to pray. But the change did not come in the Mission, or at the services of the Salvation Army. It came one summer afternoon when I was all alone by myself in my unhappy home. The children were at school; the house was quiet; and there wasn't much noise in the street. I was in my room, kneeling down at the bed, and I was praying God to help me. As I prayed a quiet feeling of strength came to me. All my struggling seemed to stop suddenly. But there was nothing strange or startling about it. I had no feeling of happiness. I wasn't taken out of myself. I just knew that strength had been given to me, a strength that I had never possessed myself, and a strength that would be sufficient for all the needs of my heart. And so, indeed, it has proved. From that day, which is more than thirty years ago, I have never once known that strength to fail me."

The greatest miracle of her life is one that would seem dull in the telling. For that miracle is a history of thirty years' patience under provocation and simple service to the sorrowful and the lost. It is a miracle because this

history has unfolded itself in the most impossible situation, and has persisted in defiance of circumstances which were utterly antagonistic to it. This quiet and patient woman, so beautiful and grateful in her old age, became from the first moment of her conversion not only a good wife to a bad husband, but a wise and devoted mother to children who had already started out on the road to perdition.

She bore with meekness all the brutalities of her husband; laboured industriously to make his home a place of rest and pleasure; scraped and contrived, with the few shillings he allowed her, to keep her children well-fed and clothed; and, doing this, she also watched over the development of her children with a tenderness and a devotion which has been the salvation of some of them. It is interesting to know that one of her sons, in spite of his father and all those evil conditions of his earliest surroundings, has been for the last twenty years a devoted missionary in foreign lands. She, too, as I must now relate, is also a missionary.

She tells me that she felt strongly but quietly impelled to use her own wonderful experience for the benefit of others. She has never worn away the first vital impression made upon her mind by the knowledge that but for the preaching which she heard from behind her window forty years ago, she might now at this moment be one of those miserable and broken old women who creep into lodging-houses when they have managed to beg a few pennies, and sleep in doorways or on benches when those pennies have been spent in drink. Because she feels she has a real experience to relate and real encouragement to give, she has attached herself to the Ragged School Mission, and goes out into the open streets as a witness to the saving power of faith in God.

The Little that is Good

I have never seen her standing at the street corner witnessing to the truth before an audience of slum miserables; but I can imagine the irresistible appeal she must make, standing there in her decent black, her beautiful pale face, with its eyes of cornflower blue, bent down to those unhappy people, and her gentle voice, so low, so real, and so even, telling, for the sake of others, her experience of a miracle.

It is characteristic of her profound earnestness that she does not make any attempt to heighten the mystery of that great event in her life. And for some people, I suppose, the miracle may seem no miracle at all because it lacks the sudden light, the swift release, the dizzying sense of exaltation, and the voice from heaven which accompany conversion in the case of certain individuals. But the magnitude of a miracle must be judged by its effects. And no one with imagination enough to conceive what her condition was before this mysterious transaction of her soul with its Maker, and with courtesy enough to believe that I have not exaggerated the change made in her life by that transaction, can doubt for a moment that it was in very truth a miracle—that is to say, a transformation of personality which is not to be explained except by some theory which connects the longing of her soul with the inscrutable operations of the invisible Reality.

One who has known her for many years, and who has the very greatest reverence for her, he himself being a most devoted worker in this same Ragged School Mission, told me a certain story concerning her so eloquent of the change wrought in her soul, so eloquent, too, of life as it is lived in our destructive slums, that even though it may

distress certain readers, I must tell it here, and so make an end of my narrative.

Some little time ago her husband, who long before had forsaken her and gone his own way to ruin, was taken at last so seriously ill that he had to be carried to the infirmary of a workhouse. It appears that lying for many days in the ward of this infirmary the memory of the long past strengthened itself within his soul and made him sorry for his sins. Perhaps he realised that but for her, the woman he had treated so ferociously and abandoned in her old age, his children might now have been lying in prisons or creeping about the gutters of London as outcasts. In any case, he repented. In this mood he sent word to her that he was dying, and asked her to come and bid him farewell.

"When she entered the ward," my informant told me, "he sat up in his bed, stretched out his arms to her, and kept his eyes fixed on hers as she approached. His face was working, as it might be with passion. When she got up to him, he took that old face of hers between his two hands, and kissed it all over—kissed it all over like a lover who is carried away by his love. And the men in the other beds got uneasy and wanted to interfere, for, knowing the disposition of the man, *they thought he was biting her!*"

CHAPTER V

OLD TIMES

I WAS asked to tea; I am quite certain on that point; and the hour was fixed at five o'clock. But when I arrived I found the table spread for an evident dinner, and my host busy at a sideboard which suggested a feast.

For some years I had greatly desired to meet this interesting person, whose name I had so often encountered in various books, and whose devotion to the costermongers of London is a part of the history of the last century.

He said to me, soon after our greetings:

"May I offer you a little refreshment? We shall not be dining till six o'clock. Perhaps you would like an *apéritif*."

It was charming to see this veteran of nearly eighty years so gallant and so debonnair, to see him so upright and vigorous, to see him so cheerful and so complete. It was difficult for me to believe that I was in the presence of one who was born a year after Queen Victoria came to the throne, and who had worked under Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War.

He is tall, high-shouldered, and solid as a wall—one of those bigly built and substantial-looking men who seem to express in their strong bodies that reputation for dogged endurance which England enjoys on the Continent. He has the full red face of our ancestors, almost boyish in its health and innocency, with jolly, shining, clean eyes, the whole solid oval of it glowing with good temper and

benevolence. This plump and hearty red face is adorned by a small moustache and a brief beard the colour of snow. His voice comes up from about half-way down the great body, and is just pleasantly husky. He speaks slowly, with a sort of grave deliberation, but all the time the smile in his eyes is jovial and alert. He is not only characteristic of the last century, but in his spirit, in his appearance, and in his manner of living he might have stepped straight out of a novel by Dickens.

When it came to six o'clock, and a neat attendant was bringing in the elements of a most hospitable dinner, this dear old gentleman interrupted our cheerful conversation with an apology, and, growing suddenly serious and preoccupied, went to the table and began the vital work of mixing the salad dressing. Allow me to recall in passing that it was a most delicious dressing, the sugar being measured to a hair's point of exactitude. And allow me also to say that I discovered later on in the evening that my host's usual meal at night consists of a glass of milk and a biscuit. But, much as I should like to describe that elegant dinner, which was an expression of my host's courtesy as much as of his warm hospitality, I must set down here only some brief account of what he had to tell me over the coffee and cigars.

William James Orsman was born in Cambridge in the year 1838, and after his schooldays went straight out to the Bosphorus, where he was attached to one of Florence Nightingale's hospitals at Scutari. He told me of his first appearance before that redoubtable lady. He had to ride on a mule's back to the hospital, and carefully choosing the mule which presented to him the appearance of a peaceful and long-suffering disposition, he set out on that

ride, discovering as he went along that appearances are deceptive even in mules. It was a fearful ride! However, he managed to reach his destination, and, greatly shaken and perspiring, entered the hospital. When he came to make his departure Miss Nightingale accompanied him to the door, standing on the steps to watch him go. Unfortunately the ill-temper of the mule had become worse during its waiting, and no sooner had our young traveller attempted to get upon one side of the animal than he found himself rolling in the dust on the other. Miss Nightingale neither ran to bind up his wounds nor hastened to offer him the healing tenderness of sympathy. Worse still, she did not even laugh at him. She stood where she was, silent, inscrutable, and watched him get up from the ground. Then, with her grave eyes bent upon his face, the great lady said:

"Young Orsman, you'll have to do better than that!"

It was on his return from the Crimea that he heard of some eccentric person in London named Spurgeon, who had taken to preaching in the Surrey Music Hall. He was angered by this information, being of a thoroughly orthodox temper, and a young gentleman who liked his Christianity—the little that he did in that way, to borrow a *Punch* phrase—to be, above everything else, well-bred. But curiosity—for a great part of London was talking about Charles Spurgeon just then—led him at last to pay a visit to these revolutionary services which so startled our fathers towards the end of the 'fifties.

His first encounter with Spurgeon was his undoing as regards orthodoxy and the conventions. Spurgeon took the soul of this young man in a grasp of iron and shook it into tremendous wakefulness. He became aware for the first time of a number of things which had hitherto

escaped his observation—to wit, his own unworthiness to style himself a Christian, the unhappiness of very many people whose existence had not troubled him in days gone by, and the fact above everything else that the great Master expected those who professed to follow Him to render certain definite and distinct services to their fellow-men. Young Orsman, fresh from tumbling off his mule in the Crimea, and now tumbled as suddenly into full spiritual awareness, was sent by Spurgeon, as little merciful as Florence Nightingale, into some of the most unattractive places for a fashionable young man to go as can well be imagined. And there "to preach the Gospel"! He was sent to preach in the New Cut, a name which was then, as middle-aged readers may remember, a synonym for a good deal of barbarism; and he was also sent into the common lodging-houses of the Mint, Southwark—that part of London which will ever be associated with some of the most pathetic pages of Charles Dickens. It was Charles Dickens, by the way, who described Lord Shaftesbury's Bill for reforming these common lodging-houses, sinks of iniquity and sewers of degradation that they were, as one of the greatest measures ever passed by Parliament. It can be imagined, then, to what stern work Charles Spurgeon put the soul of his young convert.

But, after getting rid of his first nervousness, young Orsman found a new pleasure and a new enthusiasm in this extraordinary work. He had discovered, as Goethe and Carlyle would say, his America. A new world opened for him when he came into touch first with the Ragged School in Field Lane, which has been described by Charles Dickens, and second, when he became attached to the Ragged School in Bell Alley. At this latter school a paid female teacher was engaged during the daytime, but

in the evening classes and schools were carried on by voluntary workers, several of them Mr. Orsman's friends and companions. One of these voluntary workers was a clerk to a merchant, another was in the Bank of England, another was in a Cripplegate warehouse, and another was in an insurance office. These young men, besides teaching in the schools, obtained pamphlets from the Religious Tract Society, and went about some of the worst quarters of London in order to deliver them where no priest or missionary ever penetrated.

Mr. Orsman, who was a clerk in the General Post Office, lodged at this time in Goswell Road, a thoroughfare immortalised by Mr. Pickwick. He therefore found it convenient to drop his tracts in the slums which lay between the Barbican and Old Street, which included Golden Lane, Playhouse Yard, and a regular maze of courts and alleys. It was in this wise that he discovered in Golden Lane the heart of the London costermonger—that great heart in which, next to the name of its sweetest Harriet, no name, I suppose, is so deeply engraved as that of William Orsman.

Some day a genuine history, written by a true Cockney soul, should be published of Mr. Orsman's work among these costers. He gave his life to it, and still gives all his strength to the same work. No man knows so intimately the romance and gallantry of the London coster; no man, too, knows with any such a degree of intimacy as he knows the pathos and the tragedy of the coster, which the courage of that fine fellow so often hides from the world.

"There's something about the coster," he said to me slowly, reflectively, and smiling, "which is"—he contemplated the ash of his cigar—"which is—well, very

amiable." And slowly up to the lips travelled the other end of the cigar.

Mr. Orsman insists upon the frankness and openness of the coster. He tells me that the coster is a man free of all nastiness, a clean-hearted man, a faithful friend, a pattern husband and a most devoted father.

"Of course," says Mr. Orsman, "he has his faults and his little artfulness. But it's a hard life he lives, and a number of people are out to 'do' the poor coster. Very few persons, I suppose, know the reason of the sand which the coster used to spread on his tray as a neat, clean-looking bed for his eels. Eels are sticky, sand is heavy, also adhesive, and eels are sold by weight! Oh, they're up to all sorts of dodges. Some of these men are very clever and shrewd. I remember one of them who introduced margarine into this country. Yes, it was a coster who first introduced margarine into London. He heard of it before anybody else, and went over to Holland, where it was being made, to arrange for its importation into England. He made a fortune. He was a rummy fellow, very independent and stubborn. On one occasion he arranged to meet a dealer in Paris, and could not be persuaded, although he spoke no word of French, to take anybody with him. He told me afterwards how he had discovered, by asking, that the Bristol was the best hotel, and that when he got inside, being a little put about by the magnificence of the place, he left to the waiters the trifling matter of what he should eat and drink. At the end of his dinner he was amazed to find that his bill was nearly five pounds. He came home the next day, and ever afterwards spoke of Paris with a certain measure of contempt. He was an open-hearted man, and I am sorry to say soon lost his fortune."

The Little that is Good

I asked Mr. Orsman whether he had ever been tackled on theological grounds by any of his costers. "No," he replied; "the coster never bothers about such matters. He is too frank and open for that sort of thing. It's the cobbler who is the sceptic. I have never understood why; perhaps it comes from his unhealthy life of sitting down all day; very bad for the circulation of the blood, that sort of life. But for a real *nasty* sceptic I've encountered nothing like the lasters of Bethnal Green."

For my amusement he was kind enough to open a number of dispatch boxes which were ranged round the room, and to open many drawers in the various cabinets disposed about the apartment, that I might better understand the history of this interesting work. It was delightful to me, sitting in this extremely cheerful room, which, whether it came from the light wall-paper, the bright and polished furniture, or from the radiance of his own spirit, seems to me one of the very brightest rooms I have ever entered; it was delightful, I say, to see this splendid old veteran opening scrap-books and going over ancient letters and documents, telling as he went along all manner of stories connected with the souls of costers and the hearts of little ragged children.

Among those papers I handled many a faded letter from Lord Shaftesbury, Charles Spurgeon, and Sir Arthur Bigge.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, handing me an ancient envelope with one of the old red penny stamps in the corner, "this will interest you. This envelope came to me one day with a lot of other letters, and I opened it almost the last of them all. It contained an anonymous letter, without any signature or address, and inside it was a note for a thousand pounds. I tried hard to find out who

had sent it, but from that day to this I have never succeeded."

Greatly has Mr. Orsman needed such gifts, for not only has he most liberally given his leisure to mission work, and since his retirement from the Civil Service all his time, but he has spent royally out of his own pocket in the service of costers and children. He has built in Shoreditch one of the best and completest mission premises to be found in all London, a large and cheerful centre for every kind of mission work, and with a noble great-hall as its masterpiece, provided with a gallery and an organ.

The influence of this man—the religious as well as the moral influence—has been of a remarkable order. Because of his sincerity he has reached the souls of men and women with a power that we usually associate with fervent oratory or the publicity of a great crusade. It is possible to describe him as a domestic Wesley or a local Booth.

"The greatest thing in the world," he said ruminatingly, "is sympathy. I doubt if there's a soul so dark or a heart so hard that it won't respond in the end to genuine sympathy. I have loved my work. I loved it when it was right down in the gutters, and I love it now when it's not quite so desperate. I make my people still stick to the old names. We still speak of Ragged Schools, and we still call our children 'ragamuffins.' And the need for such schools, whatever the State may do, will always be great and pressing. For no paid teacher of secular knowledge can ever get so close to the heart of a child or the soul of a poor man as the voluntary teacher of religion who loves our Saviour. Ah, I've seen wonderful things. Miracles do occur. And such

miracles will always be necessary if civilisation is to become something better than civilisation."

I do not suppose I shall ever spend another evening so purely Dickensian in its character as that evening in which I enjoyed the hospitality of this bountiful old gentleman, and listened to his amiable memories of old times. He seems to me the last representative of an age which, with all its narrowness, was nevertheless a very great age, which produced not only heroic men such as Havelock and Lawrence, but many a typical English saint like Shaftesbury and Gordon.

I walked away from his house in Claverton Street, into the murk of a winter's night, with snow on the ground and fog overhead, thinking of the Cheeryble Brothers, and wondering how many children will run to greet this cheerful spirit when he enters the next stage of the journey, and how smilingly Charles Dickens will approach him for a long talk about his beloved London.

Of course, if any costers should happen to be there at that moment, William Orsman will be carried shoulder-high into Paradise.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAMP SPIRIT

OUR first meeting happened in this way. I was visiting a very old Ragged School in the Borough—the romantic postal address of which is Amicable Row, Sweep's Alley, Tabard Street—and after passing through a number of rooms on the ground floor, all of which were crowded with children, most of them suffering from severe colds, I was conducted upstairs in order that I might see something of rooms set apart for boys of an older age. In one of these rooms I came across H.

He was seated near the fireplace at the far end of the room, which was rather dark, and round him a little circle of boys was gathered so closely that I could not see him. When he rose from his chair I took him for a young man, and during the time I remained in that dark room talking to him across the three or four rows of school desks which separated us, I thought him to be no more than four-and-twenty. It was the voice which made the greatest impression on me. So pleasant was that voice, so refined and so manful, so gentle and so quietly sure of itself, so earnest and serious and yet so kind, that my interest was wakened and my curiosity provoked. How came this young and remarkable gentleman, I wondered, to be sitting in a ring of slum boys on a Sunday afternoon?

The few words we exchanged deepened my interest. I made up my mind that we must meet again. Some-

thing unusual in this man, something which subdued curiosity to respect and admiration, quickened in my mind a desire to know him well and intimately. Perhaps the romance of the situation in which I found him stimulated this desire. You can imagine few things in London more picturesque than the scene presented to my eyes in that little upper room of an old Ragged School —an obvious gentleman, an open Bible on his knees, sitting in the closest and most friendly communion with boys whose cleanness and neatness could not obscure their poverty or their origin.

H. was good enough, a week or two afterwards, to come to my London rooms; and at his entrance (for he faced towards the light) I saw that I had been mistaken in thinking him a young man. In spite of a clean-shaven and still boyish face, his thick, slate-coloured hair is speckled with grey, and in his eyes, which are cheerful enough on occasion and which seldom forgo a grave and gentle smile which seems to be a part of their habitual expression, it is possible to read something of the spiritual history of nearly forty years.

I asked him if he would tell me something of what he must know about boys, about London boys.

He made answer in his singularly pleasant voice, laughing a little. "I will gladly try to tell you something about that inexhaustible subject; indeed, with all the will in the world. But," growing more serious, "I would much rather tell you about George Driver."

"About——?"

"George Driver. He was our Scoutmaster in the Ragged School to which you came the other day. He went to Gallipoli and died on his return to England. Several of those who knew him feel that his life ought

to be written. He was a man of the most unusual character—a Galahad of the slums. You can get some idea of the wonderful influence he excited from this little incident. On the evening of the day when he was buried at Plymouth, we had a gathering of our Scouts in the big room of the Ragged School. At the conclusion of the meeting, and entirely of their own accord, those Borough boys formed up, marched past the picture of George Driver that hangs on the wall, each boy saluting the picture as he passed it, and then, forming up in front of it, sang 'God save the King.' The spontaneity of this thought, and its beauty, will tell you that George Driver was a remarkable man."

"Tell me," I replied, "about George Driver; but first of all, something about the London boy."

"How shall I begin?" he inquired.

"Tell me," I answered, "how you approach the average slum boy when you are teaching him religion."

"A boy's spiritual life," he began slowly, "is only to be approached through the avenue of friendship. To approach the soul of any boy you must come to him as a friend. I mean that if a man, who is almost a stranger to a boy, begins to talk to him about religion the boy will be irresponsive. A feeling of confidence, the beginning of a real friendship, must first be established; and when that friendship is established there is no intimacy of the boy's spiritual life which may not be, but very reverently and very delicately, approached. I have found that to be true a thousand times. It is no use attempting to exert spiritual influence on a boy, and no use attempting to make Christ a living reality in his soul, until you are his proved friend. And to be his friend you must be at least something of a hero in his

eyes. You must be interested in the things that interest him. You must be able to play his games and delighted to share his adventures. That was how George Driver became such a power. He was fashioned in the true heroic mould. He was everything a boy looks up to and respects. In those weeks when he had boys from the Borough in camp with him, up in the Welsh mountains and beside Welsh rivers, he could have done what he liked with their souls. And he did do what he liked with those souls. He gave them a feeling of honour; he gave them a passion for virtue, and he made Christ a tremendous strength in their lives. That is what he wanted to do, and he did it as no other man of my acquaintance has ever done."

I interrupted to ask whether Christ is presented to boys through the difficulties of dogma or simply as the sublime Hero.

"As a hero," he made answer. "The spiritual life of a boy is, at its beginning, a succession of glimpses of the heroic, a succession of warm feelings of hero-worship. Nothing so stirs all that is finest and deepest in a boy's nature as heroic conduct. He admires the hero with an utmost generosity of heart. And this is true of the slum boy as of any other boy in the community. But before you can present Christ to a boy's soul with any real and living power as a hero, as the greatest of all heroes, you must—it is essential—you *must* be that boy's friend."

He was silent for a moment, and then, more slowly than he had spoken hitherto, proceeded as follows: "And you must have in your mind the very highest conceptions of friendship. It is useless to be merely kind and cheerful; no boy will ever open the sanctuary of his soul

to such an approach. No; friendship is purely spiritual. That is the secret. Friendship is catching a glimpse of the Christ in another. It is the realisation of the divine and the beautiful in that other. Until you see in man or woman or boy this glimpse of the Christ, until you are conscious in yourself that this glimpse is a glimpse of the divine and the beautiful, you cannot deeply and truly know the nature of friendship. I often think that there is one supreme test of friendship. I mean the desire and the willingness to pray with your friend—to pray with him, I mean, as the most natural act of your intimacy. When you are in very truth a man's bosom friend, when you can really stand within the innermost sanctuary of his soul, then it is natural to share together worship of God, that intimate worship which can only express itself in prayer."

He spoke so simply, so naturally and so sanely that I found myself contemplating without any surprise this rather searching ideal of friendship.

He sent me afterwards a book which has greatly influenced him, "Letters to His Friends," by Forbes Robinson, in which I found the following marked passages:

> Some men never discovered from what source his interest in them sprang. They knew that their views of the possibilities of their own life were enlarged, that they believed in themselves more for having been with him; but it was not all at once that they discovered the reason of his interest and belief in them. It was due to the Christ. With each new friendship and acquaintance which Forbes made—and this is especially true of the young man

—he saw deeper into the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ. This was the secret of his extraordinary interest and amazing belief in nearly every one of us. He saw in us all, however ordinary, however commonplace—yes, however unlovely were our lives—something somewhere of Jesus Christ.

And Forbes Robinson himself says: "Love for one person, if it be true love, leads you at once to God, for 'God is love.' I do not know what that means, but I do know that the little meaning I can see in it explains everything." And, "To understand anyone you must be their friend." And, "We never go deep enough. We skim over life. We must get into its heart. We must never begin an affection which can have an end. For all affection must draw us into God, and God has no end."

How far we have travelled from the days of Stiggins and Chadband! And perhaps none of all the Victorians would more heartily rejoice in this spiritual revolution than Charles Dickens, who, because he hated cant and religious pretentiousness, did not therefore shut the doors of his heart against the faithful disciple. But I recognise very clearly that it must be difficult for many moderns to read these words of H. without something of a shock. We are suspicious of the man who asks us to pray with him. And more often than not our suspicions are well founded. Indeed, is it not part of H.'s argument that no man has the right to make such an invitation until we have admitted him to the innermost sanctuary of our soul? There lies the magic of his thought. For, if you will reflect carefully upon what H. said to me, you

will see that his aim is not to make prayer common (on the contrary!), but to exalt friendship.

Eucken has said that "the great man lifts common life to an essentially higher plane." But this may be said also of the true man; indeed, it may be said of any who *know* in their souls that "man can inwardly transcend the world." It is true, above all, of the man who loves, the man whose heart is an altar to the divine and the beautiful, and who sees in the least of those he seeks to befriend glimpses of the Christ.

Imagine, then, the romance of that upper room in the old Ragged School, where H. sits with boys from the dark slums of a most depraving neighbourhood, and speaks to them from the depth of a spirituality which lifts prayer to the ultimate height of a divine friendship. Conceive to yourself the immense change from the days of Stiggins, and the immense change, also, from the old scholasticism and formalism of Victorian Sunday-schools. H. is one who lifts common life to an essentially higher plane. He teaches the boys who crowd about him, and who will presently return to their slum homes, that they can transcend the Borough. He destroys the power of actuality by developing inward reality. He makes every boy who loves him desire to be a disciple of the Christ.

"It might be difficult," he said to me, "but for camp life to gain the complete friendship of our boys. There is not much opportunity in a class-room of winning their full confidence. You can teach them a high standard of morality, can give them the structural truths of religion, and you can win their respect and even their regard; but I do not think it is easy—I was almost going to say that it is impossible—to gain their absolute friendship.

But camp life is a different thing. I am an enormous believer in camping; indeed"—with a smile—"a flaming enthusiast! There's something quite magnificent about the camp spirit. Among the hills, and under the big sky, you can let go with all the idealism you've got." He laughed, and exclaimed: "Oh, it's splendid, that camp life in the midst of nature! A fellow who has been to camp is quite different; you know him—you can see at once that he is different. I can't explain to you how it is, but camp life makes all the difference in the world to friendship and so to the religion of a boy. Perhaps the absence of all sensationalism has something to do with it; you see, the mental life of the poor parts of London is largely sensational. But in camp a boy wakes up to the blue sky over his head, hears the singing of birds, sees before him the quiet of the hills, the peace of the fields, and at night-time, when the day's adventures are over and the natural duties of the camp are done, he has the stars far and deep over his head. Whatever it is, this is quite certain, that during a fortnight of camp life the boy of the slums, the boy from the worst of imaginable homes, grows to be a gentleman and becomes a soldier of Christ. It is quite amazing how their souls leap to the higher life. Of course, the wonderful influence of George Driver has had an immense deal to do with the success of our camp life; and, of course, a dull or indifferent leader might make a complete failure of the experience. But, so far as I know, wherever genuine idealism is at work these camps are a tremendous success. I know of nothing that makes me so hopeful. In fact, I regard the Scout movement as one of the very greatest of our social reforms. It is changing England; it is breeding a new democracy."

He explained to me what he meant by this claim:

"We make it," he said, "one of our strongest points that each Scout must help the religious life of his neighbourhood. At the beginning he is taught to do kind acts, to be friendly and helpful, to be good and fearless. But as we draw closer and closer to his soul, and as he responds more and more to the spirit of Christ, we charge him to be a disciple of Christ's religion among his schoolfellows, in his home, in his street and in his neighbourhood. He can only be such a disciple, of course, when his heart fills up to the brim with love for Christ. It would be useless to charge him with such a mission until he loves. We do not encourage what is called the 'goody-goody' type, and for a prig—particularly a young prig—we have the very greatest disapprobation. But boys can love, can love magnificently, and when once their hearts are filled with genuine love for the beauty of Christ they become perfectly splendid apostles of idealism. Oh, you can have no idea of the transformation that is taking place in our slums. The romance of this Scout movement has never been told. You ought to go into the homes of some of our boys and hear what their mothers say, and what their fathers say; and you ought to go into dark alleys and little black courts and hear what the neighbours say. It's changing London, this Christianised Scout movement. Of course, it is a gradual change, but it's immensely greater than anything we expected. People don't hear of it because it's a silent and a spiritual change, because it is free from excitement and sensationalism; but it's none the less real for that. Everywhere a Scout lives who has caught the fire of Christ's idealism; there the miracle is at work—the miracle of the leaven of righteousness. And this is going on all over London."

I asked him whether he had any experience of sudden conversion among these street arabs who crowd about his chair in the Ragged School.

He replied, smiling: "Sudden conversions are rare. No; our experience is in another direction altogether. We are almost complete strangers to sensationalism. You see, with us it is necessarily a gradual process. We are not appealing to souls that are perishing in the foulness of sin or that are broken with sorrow and remorse. Ours is the soul of the child, slowly awakening to the truth of existence, slowly perceiving the spiritual reality behind the forms and appearances of physical life. A boy comes to Christ in the first instance as his hero. He sees the utter unselfishness of Christ, and admires it. He feels naturally and instinctively that Christ is the ideal man. This is the first stage. A little later, when the temptations of life present themselves to his soul, he becomes conscious of a need in himself for a strength greater than his own. We then teach him the first great lesson of the spiritual life. We tell him that this distress of his witnesses to a natural need in his soul for the power, the indwelling presence, and the atonement of Christ. We make it real to him that Christ is no hero set on a pinnacle for the admiration of the world, but a living companion of the human heart whose presence is at once a strength and a sanctification of the soul. And this is the second stage."

I interrupted him to ask whether he found it necessary to go into dogmatic theology with his boys. He assured me that no dogmatic teaching was necessary.

"But," I said to him, "you spoke just now of the atonement of Christ, which is a different matter from the indwelling presence of Christ, and might

present grave difficulties to certain natures and temperaments."

He answered: "I used that phrase as I use it with our boys—that is to say, as signifying a unison of the human with the divine will, as the at-one-ment of God and man. I do not think it possible to make the average boy understand it in any other sense. He *can* understand it in this sense; and since this sense is clearly the highest, since it is the supreme expression of the religious life, I always avoid the various theological definitions of the phrase. The great thing, manifestly, is to encourage a boy whose admiration for Christ as a hero is gradually and stealthily being assailed by the temptations of human life to realise that Christ is a spirit, and a spirit whose indwelling presence brings our will into unison with the divine will. He responds to that idea. He feels it natural that a loving Christ should be near to him, and that this indwelling Christ, this divine companion of his heart, should lend his strength in all those struggles of his soul to be true and steadfast. And so we find that from this second stage the spiritual life of our boys is a gradual growth, free from sensationalism, free from violent emotionalism, but not without its battles and its defeats. You would, perhaps, be surprised at the letters which we receive from some of our boys. Most people, I think, fail to realise how intellectually different the boy of the present generation is from the boy of the last. For example, here is a letter which may interest you. It was written by one of the boys who attended our Ragged School in Kent Street, and whose wonderful life-story really deserves a book."

"Tell me something of that story," I said, taking the letter he handed to me.

"This boy," he replied, "came from as bad a home as you can possibly imagine; indeed, the very worst of homes. His mother died of drink; his father, a confirmed drunkard, was imprisoned for a criminal offence against one of his own children; the home, as you may guess, was a place of vileness and horror. This boy had the misfortune to inherit a nature which made him enemies. He was one of those whom we say are born to be misunderstood. He was not a bad boy, but he made a false impression. He went to school and was formally expelled. There was nothing before him but the streets and perhaps a reformatory school. His home was a hell. His companions were all of the lowest. Happily we got hold of him. He came to our Ragged School, and we enlisted him in our Scouts. Friendship made a man of him, and a splendid man, as you will agree. For this boy became a skilled workman, and he stuck to his drunken, criminal father, and out of his earnings he kept the home for his brothers and sisters, doing everything he could for their moral welfare. And then, when war came, he enlisted to fight for his country. But that is not the end. He was billeted on the family of an old English general in one of our sea-coast towns. The remarkable moral qualities of his character attracted his host and admitted him to the closest intimacy of the family. The old general and the former slum boy became the fastest of friends, and now that old general has accepted this friend from the slums of the Borough as his future son-in-law. And he knows everything there is to know about this future son-in-law. Nothing has been kept back. And he says that such is the moral quality of this man that he would sooner have him for the husband of his daughter than any man he has ever met."

The Camp Spirit

After hearing this most interesting story it was with great respect that I turned to the letter which H. had handed me. It is a letter written in pencil from the battlefields in France, written hurriedly after an action, and not, I understand, to be judged as a fair specimen of the writer's correspondence; but, nevertheless, it is so remarkable a letter, when we consider the origin of the writer and the difficulties of his boyhood, and, moreover, it does so clearly show how the idea of religion is working among young men of this class, that I will copy it out for the reader's consideration:

> DEAR H.,—Have been deeply interested in "Robert Elsmere," and it's a book that I should like always to keep by me; but it really expresses, H., the state of my mind. While he recognises the supreme good of the world of God, he cannot recognise the miracles of Jesus. And that is a little of the situation of what I can't understand.
>
> Take the case to-day—Sunday. Here all around the work of slaughter goes on unceasingly. Shells, etc., are flying round. The only symbol of Christianity near here is the ruins of a church, hardly a brick on brick. In fact, the ruins of what Capernaum must have been, so that it cannot be recognised by man. The only dominating feature that strikes me is man's thoroughness and originality in the arts of war—the cold callousness of us when death is about, and yet, opposing this, the tenderness when a wound occurs, the few times that anything reverent is spoken, the quiet demeanour of the men, the silence in which it is received, and then a rough outburst on someone's part to get away from

it because it is so grave, and it is not good to dwell on grave matters.

The week before last I was inclined to make an experiment on the Sunday night. We had been to one of the most miserable church parades in the morning, for an hour in the rain, couldn't hear a word, the padre picking out hymns which hardly a man knew, altogether a dismal affair, rushed through, and nothing spoils the parade so much as a rush. Well, the only thing to do of an evening is to sit in an *estaminet* and talk on different subjects, where there is at least a sense of comfort; but that afternoon I suggested to one of my friends that we should go round to the voluntary service and hear what kind of thing it was. Well, the idea spread, every man went; and then, H., the criticism afterwards; the subjects were dissected in masterly fashion, done quietly, without any attempt at leg-pulling or anything like that. His weak points were weighed up, his strong points admired, and altogether it was another point to be jotted down in my recollections. That is my hobby now. Picking people's characters to pieces. Towards the end, somebody was inclined to argue, and then the whole matter was dropped; but it was a great thing, H., and the fact of it being so unusual was perhaps the matter that impressed us most. The matter is never gone into, never an argument on Religion, because we recognise the impossibility of ever coming to an agreement. My personal friends here are 1 R.C., 1 Baptist, 1 C.E., and myself. I like to think that I am a member of the faith as taught at Kent Street S.S. [Sunday School]. What it is I could not say, H., not being so learned as I

should like in such matters, but I think, H., that after all any sect is the same, eh?

At the conclusion of this letter, which is not so difficult to understand as it might seem on a hurried reading, I asked H. what he thought had been the main influence in making this man.

"Oh," he exclaimed, with a quick smile, "it was all sorts of things, everything; but I have no doubt in my mind that the way we got at him was through the camp life. It's there that the London boy opens his soul to the noblest influence. If you could only see them! Herbert Payne, our superintendent, has an old oast-house near Gravesend, and there we often go with a company of boys. Payne cooks for them and does everything indoors, and I look after the outdoor work. We're all as jolly as sandboys—jolly because our idealism becomes so tremendously real in the open air. You ought to see those boys—how they notice things, how they feel the country to be their heritage, how they show that *this* is what they have dreamed of and longed for in the slums of the Borough. How I wish it could be done on a huge scale! One of the splendid things being done by the Shaftesbury Society is tending in this direction; I mean, getting the children of other classes to meet and know their brothers and sisters of the slums. I often think of the glorious privileges of the children of the London suburbs, which they don't realise. It helps them to realise those privileges when they pay a visit to the slums; it makes them grateful, and in many cases it makes them generous; they feel a desire to share those privileges with the slums. Every year the children of our school in Kent Street pay a visit to the Lewisham Schools, where they

are entertained, and have tea and play games. There's never the smallest difficulty in getting the money for this entertainment. Lewisham children are just as enthusiastic to entertain the children of Kent Street as Kent Street is to go to Lewisham. This is what we want—a greater and closer association of all classes. And it isn't merely a method of improving the community; it's the real religion of Christ—it's the brotherhood."

He told me something of the ritual of camp life. Those slum boys, living in barns, or under canvas, in some beautiful corner of the country, assemble early in the morning and begin their worship of God by singing a hymn. Then there follows a reading of the Bible by the Scoutmaster. And before they part they kneel down and pray together. After that. . . .

"Oh, after that," laughed H., "as I told you just now, we let go with all the idealism we've got—every ounce of it! There's no height we're afraid of, no demand upon human nature which we fear to make. Absolute self-sacrifice, absolute brotherhood, absolute love—these things are far more real and natural to the camp spirit than inequality, selfishness, and all the compromises of the social organism. To the camp spirit, religion is the one and great solution of every problem. It's perfectly splendid to see how the boys open their souls to idealism, how gladly and naturally they accept it as the true way of life. We have all sorts of games. We play cricket. We go fishing and rabbiting. We climb mountains, explore woods, follow rivers, make excursions to old castles and ancient churches. And all the time, or nearly all the time, we are talking of the ideals of life, of the desire of the soul for perfection, of the lives of great men, of the infinite power and love

of God. Our minds are attuned to worship. We worship heroes, worship nature, worship day, worship night, worship the very idea of Infinity. To a boy, worship is perfectly natural, and particularly hero worship. Anyone with a knowledge of the great heroes of the past can keep London boys enchanted for hours and hours by just talking about them, telling the story of their lives, what they did, what they stood for, and how they suffered for the sake of truth and justice. I think there's nothing so fine and hopeful in the modern world as the camp spirit. But I must tell you about George Driver. . . ."

I reflected on Shelley's idea of dead heroes, those "splendours of the firmament of time," and wondered if he had seen in magic vision, gathered together at the side of some English lake or on the top of some Welsh mountain, a camp of boys from London slums, with men of education like H. and George Driver talking to them of the living dead.

> The splendours of the firmament of time
> May be eclipsed but are extinguished not.
> Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
> And death is a low mist which cannot blot
> The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
> Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
> And love and life contend in it for what
> Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there.

The dead live there! Yes, in the heart of the ragged and hungry boys of our dreadful, our disgraceful slums, who feel, as H. says, when they come to the country that *there* is their heritage, that there in nature is everything they have dreamed of and longed for in London's unnatural streets; yes, in the heart of these boys, in the heart, for example, of a child like George Acorn, but in the heart of every single boy to whom love has once

opened the enchanted pages of great heroes—there, in the heart of every child, live the mighty dead, climbing like stars to their appointed height.

How simple it makes religion! No need of long-worded catechisms painfully to be learned by memory, no need of difficult definitions, and ingenious expositions high above the tousled head of childhood; no need, either —and God be thanked for it—for that affected jocosity, that put-on geniality which in some teachers, seeking the confidence of children, has taken the place of a discredited sanctimoniousness. No; in dealing with the heart of a child there is no need for anything that is false, or half true, or unreal; no need for pedagogy of any sort or description. In the heart of a child are many thrones, and the work of the teacher is to fill those thrones with heroes. Christ the lord of all, Christ the companion, Christ the power and the beauty and the strength of the soul—yes, Christ the lord of all, supreme, exalted, and divine; but, with Christ, all those who have loved the highest and followed truth, all those whose memories transcend the world, all those whose lives make manhood a glory, and all those whose words are the music of the human race.

Wonderful to me, reflecting on the words of this Ragged School teacher, the thought that in the heart of all the desperate men and depraved women who fill our slums and drag heavily upon the skirts of progress there was once a throne waiting to be filled by a hero, once room in that great darkness for all the splendours of the firmament of time.

Aristippus, being asked what were the most necessary things for well-born boys to learn, said:

"Those things which they will put in practice when they become men."

CHAPTER VII

GEORGE DRIVER

AFTER Stiggins, Canon Henderson. It was a natural reaction. I take the liberty of using Canon Henderson as a type because it happens that I have just made acquaintance with him in a book of memoirs sent to me by the publishers. I am grateful for that act of courtesy if only for this helpful and useful introduction. The Rev. Canon Henderson comes to me in a good hour.

He was "a handsome, white-haired, thoroughbred little man of the world," says the writer, a former pupil, "and extremely popular with the students of the Dunchester Theological College, of which he was the Principal. . . . He was a delightful person, a little worldly, perhaps, but a scholar and a gentleman and a sportsman to his finger-tips. He loved you if you were enthusiastic over a game, but he would have been dreadfully uncomfortable if you had shown any anxiety about your soul." On one occasion:

> A young man who was mightily perturbed about his soul, so he said, and who had "doubts," as he expressed it, went to the Canon in great distress. Canon Henderson looked at him for a moment, and then, thoughtfully fingering his chin with his left hand, as he had a habit of doing, he peered quizzically at him over his spectacles and said: "Have you ever tried Carter's Little Liver Pills, Mr. Jones? Just take two to-night at bedtime and try to get a couple of

hours at the nets every morning, and come to see me again in a month's time."

The writer concludes: "He may not have been very spiritually minded—deep spirituality, as a rule, is not a very prominent characteristic of the Anglican clergy—but he was, in the best sense of the word, a Christian and a gentleman, and so I say again, God rest his gallant soul." [1]

Now, plainly, it would be with ease that a man so minded might make play with these astonishing remarks. For example, one might inquire what Canon Henderson would have thought of his Master, for teaching whose principles he received a certain financial recompense, if it had been recorded of him that when the young man who had great possessions came to him for counsel, he had replied in the spirit of the incident which I have quoted above. And then, too, one might inquire of the writer of these memoirs how it could be possible for one who, he tells us, was not very spiritually minded to be a Christian in the best sense of the word?—how is it possible, that is to say, for a man who misses the whole secret of the Christian religion to call himself a Christian in any sense of the word at all?

Compare with this method of Canon Henderson for dealing with the difficulties of young men the method of Forbes Robinson, of whom Mr. Digby Kittermaster says: "He was genuinely interested from the first in his undergraduate acquaintances; interested in them as men, not as promising pupils, not as likely scholars, not as athletes, not as material for 'improving' influence, but as men—individuals each possessing a separate and distinct human personality, and therefore of the truest and deepest interest

[1] "Through Life and Round the World." By Raymond Blathwayt. pp. 58, 59, 60.

to him." If it be urged that Mr. Jones of the above incident was an obvious prig, the reply might be made that with no other disciple should a master deal more earnestly and caressingly, seeing that a prig is one of the most dangerous enemies of Christ, whose spiritual offence, unconscious though it be, may become a stumbling-block to many. "While he never obtruded on us," it is written of Forbes Robinson, "religious or even serious matters, he was ready at a moment's notice to speak with us of spiritual things. . . . He understood of the 'things that matter' more than any man that I shall ever meet."

But I do not want to bear too heavily on this writer's good-natured effort to rescue a dead clergyman from a thoroughly well-earned oblivion. My one purpose in referring to Canon Henderson is to make use of him as a stepping-stone from Stiggins to George Driver. In this sense the deceased Canon may be of real service to the historian.

There was a period in the history of the English Church when the Christian religion ceased to be a religion, and became an appanage of law and manners. Men were sick to death of Stiggins and Chadband. They hated zeal, and were suspicious of earnestness. To be a Christian was to be a gentleman, and to be a gentleman was to keep the rules of society. Anyone who worried about his soul broke those rules. The travail of the human spirit was amply medicined by pills. A florin in the church plate expressed obedience to the command that man must *love* his neighbour as himself. Attendance at church on Sunday expressed obedience to that other command that man must *love* God with all his heart, and mind, and soul. And during this period children fainted in the factories, suffocated in chimneys, fell down exhausted in the turnip

fields, and huddled together in verminous rags under the arches of London.

Lord Shaftesbury, clinging to some of the ancient forms of religion, brought a new spirit into action. He faced the Lords and Commons of England with the slum child; he challenged the Anglican hierarchy with the commands of Christ. Slowly but surely the Church roused itself from sleep. On one of its wings there was a poetic effort to recapture the Catholic spirit of worship; on the other, an endeavour to express through philanthropy the life of devotion. But in its centre Canon Henderson persisted and even grew stronger. He was too much of a sportsman to be attracted by the sensuous enticements of ritual: too easy-going a gentleman to bother himself with dirty people and ragged children. His faith remained unshaken—faith in pills and cricket bats. Men like Kingsley and Maurice made heroic attempts to Christianise the sporting disciple and to imbue the gentlemanly establishment with the spirit of brotherhood. There was, indeed, something of a faction strife between the two wings of the Church to capture the centre, the great centre of inertia and conservatism which clung with a thoroughly English tenacity to its pills and bats, and which was enthusiastic over a game, but would have been dreadfully uncomfortable if you had shown any anxiety about your soul. And as the years passed and the Shaftesbury bishops of Palmerston's long reign died one by one, it became clear, that whatever the victory might be, that victory was going to the Catholic party. Stiggins was buried, Canon Henderson lay on his deathbed, and the Cowley Fathers were preaching in the neglected slums of our untidy cities.

But another and a less visible transition was taking place. Men who felt the powerful attraction of Christ, who

had inherited English puritanism in their blood, who were tremendous realists in the sphere of conduct, and who saw a certain grand and single simplicity in the gospel of Jesus, began in scattered quarters of the country to serve their Master as ministers to the poor and friendless. These men were as far from the ritualists as from the dogmatic extremists of evangelicanism. They had as little mind for forms and ceremonies as for painful and unhealthy self-analysis. They did not concern themselves at all with the letter of religion, but very humbly endeavoured in lives of devotion and service to express the spirit. They would have been, perhaps, many of them, as greatly distressed as Canon Henderson by one who came to them to talk about his soul; but their answer would have been not a recommendation of a patent medicine, but a suggestion that the young man should sell all that he possessed and give it to the poor. Most of these men belonged by temperament to the Low Church party or to the Dissenting Churches, and were somewhat haunted by the theology of Shaftesbury; they were a little sad, and perhaps not very conscious of discipleship, but the main current of their lives flowed into service, and they were above and beyond everything else Christian philanthropists.

Their places are now taken by another generation. Stiggins is dead, so is Canon Henderson, and so, too, are most of these Victorian philanthropists. A new order of disciples has come into existence, an order so splendid and so enfranchised and so rejoicing that acquaintance with it makes me look confidently for one of those historic revolutions which are characteristic of the Christian religion, an order which is not distressed by empty churches, not disturbed by warring dogmatists, not cast down and dejected by the triumphs of materialism, so convinced is it of the

entire truth of those two great sayings: "I have overcome the world," and "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the ends of the world." To this order belonged George Driver —that Galahad of the slums.

George Driver was born in the middle 'seventies, the son of a City business man who lived in the suburbs of London. He was the youngest of the family. Perhaps because of his physical gawkiness he was backward in mental development. His progress at school was slow and painful. H., for example, four years his junior, was in the same form as Driver.

H. saw nothing of this schoolfellow till some years afterwards when both of them as young men were at work in the City. They met by chance in the streets. H. recognised Driver on the instant by the latter's rather memorable looseness of body. They stopped to speak, and after comparing notes as to their official work, H. spoke about his devotion to the Ragged School Mission in the Borough. Driver was surprised when H. said that this work after office hours had the effect of "bucking him up." He replied that, as for himself, when his office work was concluded all he felt fit for was to sit over the fire till he fell asleep. H. suggested that he should come down some evening to the Borough, and see for himself how amusing and delightful was this work among slum children.

At this time of his life George Driver was living alone with his widowed mother, to whom he was most gently and sweetly devoted. He had all the shyness and tenderness and limpness of mind which so often go with such fireside devotion. He was eminently the good and rather ineffectual son who lives a solitary and old-maidish life in the society of his white-haired mother. An extraordinary

diffidence characterised the man. His very smile was a piece of shyness. His gestures, his carriage, his speech, witnessed to a sense of awkwardness in his mind. Dobbin must have had some such gait and manner.

But there was a good deal of cleverness in the man's brain. His work was in the office of a company which owned considerable property, and his first initiation into this mystery lay in the duty of collecting rents. As he went about on this task he would look in at the shops which sold old furniture, and very often he would discover a cabinet, a chair, or a mirror which were cheap enough for his purse because they were in so dilapidated a condition. These things he would buy, and when they arrived at his suburban villa, he would spend his half-holidays in repairing them, doing this delicate work so skilfully that he was able to dispose of the articles for a higher price than he had paid for them. It is noteworthy that this suburban clerk, shy and badly educated, had an instinctive sense of fitness in art.

He was a tall, loosely-knit man, with hair of a bright golden brown, a fresh skin, clear shining eyes of a notable steel grey, and a mouth that smiled easily and betrayingly under its abrupt moustache. There was nothing in his appearance at this time to suggest vigour of mind and resolution of will; he was the very last man in the world, you would have said, to be a leader of men. But there was, nevertheless, a clear indication of great amiability, and for those who took the trouble to cultivate his acquaintance there were many signs of an original disposition, not without evidence of idealism. If he was entirely without religious seriousness (which seems probable) he was by temperament antipathetic to the grossness of sin or the vulgarity of materialism. He loved his mother, was very

painstaking in work that he disliked, and happy enough in his hobby as an amateur carpenter. So he might have lived and so he might have died but for that meeting with his old schoolfellow in the streets of the City of London.

George Driver accepted the invitation of H. and paid a visit one evening to the Ragged School in Kent Street. Nothing would induce him to take any part in the teaching which went on in the school, but he consented to help H. with the library—all the essential neatness of his soul being sorely distressed by the condition of the books. These very grimy and dishevelled volumes he carried off in sections and covered with strong white linen until the whole library was so clothed; once every three or four weeks he himself took these soiled covers off and washed them to their first whiteness.

In this way George Driver began to work in the Borough.

He met in this school its present treasurer and its animating spirit, Mr. Herbert Payne, an official of the Corporation of London and a kinsman of that Judge Payne who was a friend of Lord Shaftesbury. To George Driver, in the opinion of H., this acquaintance with Mr. Payne was a decisive influence. "Herbert Payne," says H., "is an out-and-out enthusiast for the Sunday-school, a man most deeply and earnestly spiritual; but he sees, and has always seen, that you cannot teach with much profit on Sunday afternoon children of whom you have seen nothing all the week. It was Herbert Payne who introduced the games and recreations of the week-days, who started cricket clubs and football clubs, gymnasiums and country excursions, who taught us that we must become the friends of the children before we could hope to be their teachers.

Driver came under his influence. It changed the whole current of his life."

It seems to me that with this influence of Mr. Payne, who in spite of a very cheerful and humorous disposition is something of a martinet, with no mercy for the voluntary worker who makes a fool of himself, there was also the influence of H. penetrating to Driver's soul, and giving him new ideas of Christ and higher conceptions of love and friendship. I think his spiritual life at this time must have been a very lonely one. He was beginning at the age of twenty-five to conceive of a new philosophy of life. The idea of religion which he discovered in Kent Street must have been something of a shock to his soul. It is certain that he never once told his mother what he was doing in the Borough; for that old and adored lady went to her grave without any knowledge of the new life which had come to her son, and it was not until after her death that George Driver gave himself heart and soul to the work of the Ragged School.

There was a clerk in the office where he worked so threatened by consumption that it seemed likely he would not long be able to withstand the rigour of London winters. For the sake of this fellow-worker, for he was scarcely a friend, Driver took a house near Wimbledon Common, and had him to live there, doing everything he could to cure that dreadful disease. This was the first act, I think, of his new life. But that house near Wimbledon was soon to be occupied by other and very different guests.

One day H. mentioned to Driver that he had met a Kent Street boy in the most dreadful condition of misery and poverty, a boy who had only lately shown splendid signs of improvement; he asked Driver to make inquiries

about him. "The sight of that little chap," H. told me, "wrung my heart, and haunted me for days after. It is awful to see a slum boy who has begun to climb out slip suddenly back into a worse condition than before. I must tell you that this boy was the son of a barber who had lost his employment because of shaky hands, the shakiness being caused by drink; and I must also tell you that this family lived in one of the foul little courts at the back of Tabard Street, but *not* in one of the houses—they actually lived, the whole lot of them, in a shed in one of the back-yards of one of those horrible little houses."

In a few days' time H. received from George Driver, with some astonishment, the following letter:

> Our little brother Tom is right material, and we can guide him towards a useful and happy life. . . . I captured him and brought him home on Monday night (with consent of his parents). He had a hot bath and clean clothes. I then gave him a meal and told him that I did not think in the past he had had a fair chance, but now all that was to be changed; he had thrown off his old life with his old clothes, and started quite afresh, a sturdy English boy with myself as his big loving brother.
>
> I let him know that I thought a good deal of him, that he would not get any sharp words, but that he must play thoroughly square with me. After saying his prayers he went to bed ideally happy, with my little kitten as bedfellow. In a few minutes he was fast asleep, and I thought of the hymn "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," and resolved that the slums should not sully him henceforward.
>
> Tuesday morning he awoke with delight in his new

surroundings and with the firm intent of doing his best. My home, of course, would be a bad influence if it led only to laziness and luxury, so I put him on to clean the boots, and then during the day to clean windows; I did one as a pattern, and explained to him that he must work quickly and well. Of course he is a new broom, but he turned out a veritable St. George —the work was done splendidly.

We are taking each day by itself with prayers at the start and a renewal of resolves to do our very best.

Wednesday. He left the house at 10 o'clock, with a wash-leather, to call on houses in the district for window cleaning. . . .

Thursday. We further developed the programme by my giving him a note to the effect that he was honest and could clean windows, scrub floors, etc., and I told him to look out for parties moving in to new houses. The weather was good and he got jobs and . . . returned to me with overwhelming delight and 8d. Twopence he received for pocket-money, and 6d. will go in the bank.

Friday. Programme still further developed by the addition of a note-book to write down where he went, and when parties would require him again—also fortified with a tin of brass polish and polishing rags in addition to wash-leather.

The rest of this long letter is devoted to the boy's future, and contains a suggestion that he should be apprenticed to a good and just tradesman of George Driver's acquaintance—a suggestion which was acted upon.

In this way our Galahad of the slums began his work

of fighting for the souls of likely lads in the Borough, taking them into his own house, teaching them always to regard him as their "big, loving brother," and interesting himself in everything that concerned their welfare. He kept in this home of his a supply of white jerseys, knickerbockers, stockings, underclothing, and boots. The little ragged boys whom he brought home with him every Saturday were first given a hot bath, and were then presented with a complete outfit of clean clothes, so that without any uneasiness they might mix and play with other children on Wimbledon Common; these clothes were their property until Monday morning, when they returned to their rags and went back to the slums.

He was convinced from his first experience in the Ragged School that what children wanted was the friendship and personal service of older and better-educated people. He had very little mind for the actual work of a Sunday-school, and believed that friendship inspired by love was the supreme way of winning a boy's soul to the higher life. It amazed him to find how swiftly the slum boy responded to genuine friendship, and no amount of disappointments ever clouded his first joy in this discovery. He had found a whole world of friends.

Driver contracted this love for slum boys at the recreation evenings of the Ragged School. One of those who worked with him (since a prisoner in Germany) has kindly given me an account of the proceedings on those occasions. He writes:

> By six-forty-five a queue of some eighty or ninety youngsters would be waiting admittance. At five minutes to seven Mr. Payne would open the door

and they would file past him, and every now and again he would stop a boy who, he knew, had not been present on the preceding Sunday, the condition of admittance being attendance at Sunday-school.

By the time Mr. Driver arrived (he used to arrive regularly at about five minutes past seven) the hall was pretty full. He always carried a bag which contained badges for the officers and prizes for the winners; later on the Scouts acted as officers. To these boy officers he also gave a label to pin on their coats, showing in what capacity they were to act—for instance, as officers of draughts, ping-pong, bagatelle. They were also handed sheets of foolscap ready for them to fill in the names for these tournaments, which lasted until eight o'clock. When these had been handed out Mr. Driver would mount the platform, get immediate silence, and read out the handicaps; a boy on winning a prize would be handicapped three points for the following week—this prevented the same boys winning each week, and the points against him would be reduced by one each week.

While these tournaments were going on, boxing and wrestling and card games would be proceeding, and certainly that hall must have presented a queer sight to a stranger.

By eight o'clock the whistle would go for the games to be cleared up. Prizes for the winners of the various contests (in the shape of a pot of jam, a bottle of sweets, quarter-pound of tea, or some similar article) would be given to each winner. Then these smaller youngsters would be sent off home, making room for boys coming in from work. Physical drill would follow for one hour in the hall, while Mr.

Driver would superintend the shooting-class in the infants' school adjoining. At nine o'clock all boys under fourteen (schoolboys) went out to make room for the seniors. The seniors had the hall from nine till ten-fifteen for gymnasium, billiards, etc.

After the boys had all gone Mr. Payne, Mr. Driver and myself used to clear up, sweep the floor and put out folding tables ready for free meals on the following day. (This was before the period of free breakfasts, and at a time when hundreds of slum children arrived hungry every morning at school.) In those days we seldom caught a train from Waterloo before the eleven-ten, calling at a coffee-stall in Tabard Street on our way to the station. On Saturdays we took four teams down to Forest Gate, having football matches in the winter and cricket matches in the summer.

In 1909 H. met someone who spoke to him about the Scout movement, so impressing him with the idea that he mentioned it to Driver. "That's the very thing for Kent Street!" exclaimed Driver; and from that moment he tacked the Scout movement on to the Ragged Schools. It was difficult work at the outset. In the whole vast borough of Southwark there was only one troop of Boy Scouts, and Driver's introduction of the movement into Kent Street was met by ridicule and opposition. His first recruits were pelted with mud and refuse, were derided as they went through the streets, and subjected to a score of petty persecutions. But Driver held on, and the boys stood loyally at his back.

I have now to tell something of Driver's theology, to get nearer the soul of this remarkable man, to define

as far as such things are possible the secret of his personality. And here we approach that matter to which I referred in my preface to this chapter—namely, the new order of disciples which is gradually forming itself all over the world under the influence of a constantly creating Christ.

Driver believed with his whole soul in the God of nature. It was when he had thrown off the city that he felt himself nearer to the great and loving God of this most beautiful universe, a God Who smiled upon His creation, Who loved and desired love, Who was to be reached by love and nothing but love, Who demanded no hard service, Who required no obedience to ritual, Whose yoke was easy and Whose burden was light. When and how Driver discovered this God I am not able to tell. He has left no record of his discovery. We only know that acquaintance with the work of the Ragged School in Kent Street unlocked his solitary heart to the delight of friendship, that in playing games with the poor children of that neighbourhood he came out of himself and found a new meaning in life, that in asking children to stay with him in his home he came nearer to the heart of humanity (perhaps also nearer to the heart of God), and that in the Camp Life of the Boy Scouts he realised the fullness and beauty of natural existence consecrated by love.

It is a constant phrase in his letters and writings that boys should be given "a fair chance." The phrase is characteristic. It was at the heart of his religion that humanity, in natural conditions, is good, and desires goodness. He was often sorely tried in this faith. One of the boys to whom he devoted himself did five pounds' worth of damage in his house, drove his housekeeper into such a fury that she gave notice to leave, and so tried the con-

sumptive friend who lived with him that this poor gentleman announced his intention henceforth to take his meals outside. But Driver held firm to his faith. 'Give a lad a fair chance and he will see the moral superiority of goodness, will want to ascend, not to go back; will do his best, not his worst. His demand of society was that every child should be given a fair chance. He was one of the first men in his district to work for instruction in arts and crafts, and did everything in his power to revive the system of apprenticeship.

There were times when he did not see eye to eye with Mr. Herbert Payne, and times when he more or less withstood the efforts of H. to deepen his religion by an intenser or, as I should prefer to say, a more mystical spirituality. He was a modest man, and a man not very able to express his faith in words; but, acknowledging the beauty of the lives of his friends, he stuck to his own ideas, followed his own Christ, and lived for the most part outside the folds of all orthodoxies. To one whose whole life is consciousness of God, those periodic attentions to religious "duties," those regular reminders, that there *is* a God, and that we ought to try to love Him, can never be necessary, and sometimes may be painful or irritating. Driver's religion was to love God, and to love his "little brothers and sisters." And this love of his was spontaneous and irresistible. It was his life.

On one occasion Mr. Payne wrote to him suggesting that he should give more time to the Sunday-school and less time to parties of boys at his own home, to which Driver replied as follows:

> My one aim in coming to the school is to influence the youngsters to live Christian lives. I never have

carried my religion on my coat sleeve, because I loathe such a practice, but it is none the less sincere because I do not parade it. With regard to Sundays, the day (when boys are with me) is never regarded merely as an opportunity for amusements. After breakfast we often have a few hymns; the boys then usually go for a walk with me on the common, and this I consider, as an occasional change to Sunday-school, brings them in very real touch with Christ and His works. In the evening we very seldom go to church, but we always have hymns and often a reading for an hour or an hour and a half.[1] It is true that in between whiles they do have games and read. . . . I have never knowingly missed a single opportunity which has arisen for giving religious encouragement. . . . I write some hundreds of letters to the youngsters every year, and they are all written with the fundamental aim of strengthening their Christian characters. I also have some hundreds of letters from the youngsters—perhaps some day you shall see them, then you will know the very close personal touch I get to with them, because I approach them as a brother, quite free from the barrier which separates a teacher from a pupil.

In one of his letters to H. he gives a list of what he calls his religious "tenets," from which one gathers that he was largely in sympathy with the Frenchman's apothegm that "Le Dieu défini est le Dieu fini." He lived, it seems to me, with a blind confidence in the mere idea of God,

[1] He was very fond of reading poetry to his boys, and from H. seems to have contracted a certain interest in that school of æsthetic thought which we associate with the names of Morris and Ruskin. Someone described him as the most socialistic Tory he had ever met.

blind because the eyes of his soul were dazzled by the bare thought of Infinite Love and Power. For Christ he had loyalty, admiration, and a love which expressed itself in obedience to the golden rule. He had no other hero in his soul, but perhaps Christ was never more to him than a hero. Socially and intellectually, he was eminently the modern Englishman of the London suburbs, a firm Conservative, an enthusiastic Imperialist, and a believer in English manhood. This temperament does not easily follow the path of mysticism. It is essentially a happy temperament, easily pleased, vigorously courageous, and not very imaginative; certainly it has no mind for hair-splitting and no aptitude for plumbing the depths. George Driver must be called a shallow person, but his shallowness was the shallowness of a nameless summer brook which catches more of God's sunlight (so that the very gravel of its golden bed is warm) than broader, ancient, and famous rivers which sometimes perhaps mistake their mud for profundity.

Driver had grown in this slum work to be a blithe disciple. He was overflowingly happy. He found such intense joy in the actions of disinterested love that he could not bother his head about theological perplexities. He believed so absolutely that it was not worth his while to think. Where could thinking lead him?—not nearer to the heart of God than loving. So he loved with all his might, happily and rejoicingly, content to leave mystery to other people, himself the least of the hounds of heaven tracking down the souls of men for the great Master, his sublime Hero, Jesus the Christ of God. His theology, he said, whatever its shortcomings, brought peace to his soul. He was happy to his heart's content.

The great achievement of Driver's life was the institu-

tion of what he termed the Good Service work of his Boy Scouts; and this was an expression of his religious faith. I have been privileged to see the private book of this little humble society of Jesus, and I know not when I have read anything more moving. The book is a handsome volume bound in vellum with Driver's fine lettering on the cover stating that it is:

THE GOLDEN BOOK
of the
KENT STREET TROOP.
Being a
Record and Register
of
Good Service Work.

Underneath are two lines from a song which he himself composed for the Troop:

"When the Kent Street Scouts go scouting they are friends of all the world."

And:

"All use your eyes and do good where'er you can."

The first of the resolutions recorded in this book, written by one of the Scouts, tells us what was Driver's aim:

> To earn a name throughout the district for good and kindly service whenever it can be rendered, by succouring the weakly, helping the poor, generally relieving distress, and bringing happiness into the lives of little children. In so doing not only giving benefits to those most in need, but by practical good work demonstrating what true Christianity is.

And the fifth of the resolutions says:

> To see that delicate children receive proper medical treatment, that the parents are informed of the best possible health rules to adopt, that out of money earned by the Scouts extra nourishment be given, that warm blankets be lent out during winter months, that additional holidays in the country be paid for, and that all children so befriended be known as "Good Service little brothers" or "sisters."

The rest of the book is composed of a record of this service. You learn from it how the Scouts found out cases of distress, reported them, resolved what should be done, and then set to work to earn money for their relief. They sang carols in Park Lane and Eaton Square at Christmastime (George Driver himself calling at the houses); they sold "favours" on Boat Race day, they bought and sold, they made things, and they worked for other people, earning in these ways sufficient money to support their Good Service work.

One record in this book will show how alert were these Scouts to discover cases of distress:

> Mrs. ——. Met in L.C.C. tram. Elicited that husband, a merchant seaman, had a week previously returned from Portugal suffering from pleurisy, was taken in at Champion Hill Infirmary where he had just died. She was left with four young children to support.

And another record, dealing with the case of a consumptive and fatherless child aged 5, will show in what manner the Scouts treated their little brothers and sisters:

> Policy decided on: Frequently call and see him. Pay for an extra week's summer holiday for him in the

country. Occasionally have him at week-end Scout camps. Send him extra bed covering during winter months. If necessary supply him with sound boots. Press "Care Committee" that they should arrange for emulsion to be supplied regularly. Give him a card of special health rules applicable to his case. Generally befriend him in every way possible.

This work, which has now spread all over the country and has planted itself already in British Dominions, so absorbed George Driver that he forsook his villa in the suburbs and came to live in the Borough. He had made friends with a family in Tabard Street, which lived by the manufacture of artificial flowers, and there he went to live over the shop. The head of the family was an out-and-out Tory after Driver's heart, and the mother was a cheerful and most kindly soul who made excellent rock-cakes. Driver always called these two his father and mother.

So successful was his work in the Scout movement that he now took a leading part in the organisation for South London, becoming also a hard-working member of many committees labouring for the welfare of that dreary, sordid, but most heroic quarter of sprawling London. He arranged with his employers (being a valued servant and possessed of some small private means) that he should have his Saturdays to himself, and nearly every week-end was devoted to camping with his boys. (H. tells me that he must have spent at the very least £100 a year on his camps.) His capacity for work was prodigious. He was often hard at work with his writing till one or two o'clock in the morning, but he was always at his office in London by eight o'clock. He played scout games with the boys of Kent Street in the courts and alleys round Tabard Street, took

part in the recreation evenings at the Ragged School, attended drills and committees, organised the Scout movement in South London, and made up parties for camping out during the week-end.

Under the pressure of this life his health gave way, and he was warned by the doctor that a complete nervous breakdown would ensue unless he made a radical change in his existence. It was at this crisis in his life that a great dream came to his soul—the dream of establishing a Scout Colony in one of the British Dominions across the sea. What a glorious duty, what a God-sent honour, to lead out from the slums of London a great company of splendid lads, the traditions of England in their blood, and to found in fair lands of sunshine far across the sea new Englands loyal to the old, but with fresh and younger ambitions in their souls.

This was the great dream of Driver's life, and whether he got the idea from Carlyle, or whether, as is more likely, it came from his own intense sympathy for the children of London slums, he set about its realisation. If he had to leave England, to leave London, to leave the slums, well, he would not go selfishly and alone.

He was a practical man, and determined to begin with caution. He made various inquiries and discovered that there was every prospect for the success of such a Scout Colony in Western Australia. But to take out a large party would have been hazardous; and also it was beyond his means. He decided, then, that he would take the pick of his Kent Street lads, three of the very best and most dependable of his disciples, and that with these three he would go prospecting to the end of bringing out every year a fresh number of Scouts.

It is a striking testimony to his hold on the neighbour-

hood that the father of a boy whom he had made into a splendid citizen, himself a typical slum-dweller but hard-working, sober, and respectable, should come to Driver, hearing of this scheme, and offer him, without interest and to be paid back whenever Driver chose, the whole of his life's savings, a sum of £60.

And another testimony to his hold on the neighbourhood was the farewell meeting held in the hall of the Ragged School, when the place was packed full to suffocation, and lad after lad stood up to say what Driver had done for him. "That meeting," Driver told H. in a letter of good-bye, "was my Calvary." He suffered a veritable agony of soul, hating to sit there listening to praise, feeling how little he had done, and shrinking from the thought of parting with such lovable friends. He told H. that one of the thoughts which haunted him and oppressed him was the thought of all the friendless, unloved, unnatural, and suffering childhood in South London which he had been unable to reach.

I have no space, unhappily, to quote from the log of this Scout enterprise, which well deserves full publication, but there is one incident in a letter to his successor as Scoutmaster of the Kent Street Scouts, so characteristic, I am assured, of Driver's spirit, that I cannot forbear from giving it.

It must be explained that after a very cheerful civic welcome in Perth, with a reception by the Legislature and kindly articles in the newspaper, this little party, with its funds exhausted (but no one knowing that fact), journeyed up country to work on a big farm. They pitched camp four miles from the farmer's residence, called the "Homestead," and styled this clearing in the backwoods "The Camp of the Golden Dawn." In this way Driver

The Little that is Good

writes to his successor in the Kent Street Troop of Boy Scouts:

> . . . Next little obstacle was when at our camp the second supply of provisions got delayed on the rail somewhere, and not having drawn any wages we were spun out in cash as well, and so could not get even bread unless we asked the "Homestead" for it, and showed we were penniless. So for fourteen days we lived on the very scantiest of supplies which we still had left. It was great, tested the Scouts splendidly, and they came out right on top; never a grumble, simply a drawing in another hole of the belt, extra chats on meals they had had in the past and ones they hoped to have in the future, keen delight derived by reading my cookery book and a Stores' provision list; and so, with heavy, straining work which ring-barking is, and a climate that gives one an appetite as of three men, we still forged ahead dauntless as ever.

Later in this same letter I read:

> Herein I send you P.O.O. for £2 5s. (let me have a card to know it reaches you safely), being 25s. earned by us on board by photography (we should like this to be used either toward porridge breakfasts or for some special benefits to those in distress at 'Xmas—there is that poor woman whose little girl was in Champion Hill Infirmary . . .), also I send along £1 to you especially and privately to help just a little in the expenses of the troop.

And he goes on:

> Keep your spirits up, dear old chap; ever have the definite goal to gain for the lads before your eyes. We shall be marching three strong ahead now, and I

> tell you that the Australian Section is going forward faster than even my most optimistic thoughts ever foreshadowed; just to look in the chaps' faces, to see there glorious health and the birth of new hopes in place of pale complexions and crushed spirits, compels me to realise that the almost foolhardy step which I took shows every prospect of culminating in most glorious success.

The once timorous and diffident son of the fireside had become a captain of pioneers, a leader of men. He could scarcely contain his enthusiasm. His energy was able to accomplish miracles. He worked with an axe in the forest, learned sheep-shearing, could drive a plough, and was an excellent cook, an imperturbable housekeeper. In addition to these labours, he wrote voluminous reports for the authorities in London, corresponded at extraordinary length with his chief friends at home, and wrote hundreds of letters to his little brothers in the slums. I have seen some of these letters, and they all witness, in spite of their boisterous beginning and their cheerful language, to a literal hunger and thirst of his soul for the boys' moral and spiritual welfare. He was for ever telling the slum people that they must not be content to exist, but that they must *live*—live with all the force and energy of their wills, assured that existence can be handled and turned to noble ends. Among these home letters were many to the family of flower-makers in Tabard Street, his "father" and his "mother," recalling their kindness to him, drawing pictures of evenings at their fireside, speaking of the mother's matchless rock-cakes. But the best letters of all, so intensely personal as to be sacred, were the letters to his "little brothers." I think he agonised for their souls.

The Little that is Good

The colony was progressing splendidly, Golden Dawn was becoming the realisation of all his dreams, when war broke out in the autumn of 1914—about a year after the camp had been pitched in the backwoods of Western Australia. Driver and his Scouts enlisted at the first call, and in Gallipoli, after fearful experiences most bravely borne, Driver was stricken down with enteric. After fearful sufferings, and something like five transhipments, he was brought to England, landing at Devonport in a dying condition. His letter of farewell to H. ends with the words: "I have accomplished what I set out to do." He died peacefully. He was given a military burial, with a detachment of Kent Street Scouts among the followers, and to this day his grave is kept bright with flowers by the Scouts of Plymouth.

In his pocket-book, which had accompanied him into the firing-line, were found fifty little photographs of slum boys, each the size of a postage stamp; and with them were some of their letters of which the following are extracts:

> I often think when passing the old Bromley Camp on a bike ride whether we shall see you in years to come with another twenty-four of us in shorts. I know, if strength would permit, it would happen so. Don't think we have forgotten you at home . . . there is hardly a day goes by without your name is mentioned along with the boys.
>
> When I think of all the things you have done for me alone, I feel that I can never repay you. I look upon the slums of Tabard Street and realise that but for your guidance and influence I may have been one of the many who go to make these slums.

George Driver

Be sure the thoughts of one who owed a lot to your fine example at a critical time in his life are always with you.

I hope you won't think it cheek if I say that I always used to admire the brotherly, gentle spirit you taught us; of course, it must have had its effect. I'm glad you helped me, and thank you.

In this neighbourhood there is apparently a blank space which people, all sorts and conditions of folk, know well they will never refill. A strong staff has gone out of their hands. They can no longer lean upon it as in days gone by for advice, assistance, strength, and comfort. . . . All must now do without the aid, and rely upon their own powers. All feel a great sense of loss; but all find comfort in just the memory of having used the strong arm of a man who never thrust that arm behind his back at the call for help.

Well, good-bye, and God bless you. Thank you for the example of LIFE which you have left behind for others to try to follow.

And with these papers was a prayer written in his note-book on the battlefields one Sunday morning:

Great and merciful Father,—At this hour many hearts are looking up unto Thee from the Homeland, and Thou lookest down upon them with pleasure, and dost accept their joy and praise. They seek to express thankfulness for their many blessings. As a wanderer in a foreign land, apart from loved ones and conditions loved, I, too, would seek grace. How beautifully all loving Nature in this pleasant woodland valley praises

Thee, through the deep consciousness of Thy greatness and omnipresence here. I am moved to bow before Thee. Help me to clearly define the road before me. Oftentimes unholy desires have darkened my conception of life; reconstruct my character to be worthy of my relationship and heritage through Jesus Christ. Strengthen the pillars of this earthly temple that it may stand strong against the shells of temptation and explosives of the devil. Let Peace reign in the hearts of parents and families; accept my gratitude for their unfailing love and save me from bringing upon them disgrace.

If his life, recorded here with a dwarfing and obscuring brevity, does not strike you as a memorable life, let me beg you to compare it with the lives of other men, hundreds and thousands of them, such men as live in the parish of St. James's in London, whose whole existence is spent between their lodgings and their clubs, the theatre and the restaurant. Compare this life, full of ringing enthusiasm for the soul of the slum child, inspired by a burning love of God, and made tremendously and utterly real by faith in the moral grandeur of humanity, compare this life of a suburban clerk with the profitless, selfish, and dissatisfying life lived by so many men of education and means—who might, if they had but the will, lead colonies of their fellow-citizens out of our crowded cities and into the British dominions beyond the sea. In the sphere of national service alone it is a memorable life.

And there is a mystery in this life. His conversion, for it was a veritable conversion, reminds us of the conversion of the early Christians.

How can we explain the change in Driver, the spiritual

transition from the amateur carpenter and devoted son in a suburban villa to the Galahad of Southwark slums, the pioneer of a Scout colony?

"He came to us," H. said to me, "literally in trepidation. He had never done anything of the kind before. He came to render the very humblest form of help, and yet he came in trepidation. But he found in that Ragged School something he had never known before. He found the love of God. And his life was caught up in that flame, caught up into that flame, and it *burnt!* I cannot describe to you the change in the man. He simply glowed with enthusiasm. He became alert and vigorous, held himself with a new dignity, and his voice grew to be the voice we associate with a great soldier, a voice that rang. Driver was one of the most splendid men that ever lived. He had the heart of a child, and that heart was filled with nothing but reverence, worship, and love. His touch has influenced thousands. He is still a power in the lives of a great company."

I asked him whether Driver ever spoke of this change, whether he was conscious of any single moment in his life when the light shone into his soul. H. replied:

"He never spoke of the matter. It was a change, however miraculous, without any dramatic moments. I think it was accomplished by the discovery of friendship. He found that the slum boy of the present generation is likeable, lovable, and sometimes magnificent material. To give himself for these boys was his first enthusiasm. Then he saw how Herbert Payne toiled to reach the souls of these boys. This moved him deeply. He was tremendously impressed by the love at the back of Herbert Payne's patient work to awaken spiritual consciousness. And in the camp life he caught the camp spirit. No man ever

had the camp spirit in the same degree as George Driver. It filled him, fulfilled him, and overflowed from him. He was never so happy and never so inspiring as when he was living in camp with the boys whom he loved to call his little brothers. He talked to them like an inspired poet of the greatness of life, of the love of God, of the joy of service. Service—that was the heart of his religion. It was his eternal sermon—no, not sermon, his eternal song—that loving service to the weak and the suffering and the unhappy is the true discipleship. And he held vigorous opinions on the subject of human dignity. He hated to see human nature degraded. He strove with all his might to make his Scouts self-respecting and self-reliant. He was suspicious of charity. He was sceptical about the machinery of religion and philanthropy. The only thing which won his unqualified approval was sane, devoted, and enthusiastic *personal* service. In that way he believed the world could be swung round to the Will of God."

There we must leave it.

George Driver was one of those men, as I have said, who remind us of the early Christians, those wonderful, nameless people who, before there was an altar and priesthood, before there was liturgy and rubric, before there was theology or schism, before there was anything but the inward witness of the Spirit of Christ, conquered the world. "They sang, they overflowed with good temper. It seemed as if they had been born again. As Clement of Rome wrote, the Holy Spirit was a glad spirit. The word used both by him and by St. Augustine is that which gives us the English word 'hilarious.' There was a new gladness and happiness about these people. . . . And it was Jesus who was the secret of it."[1]

[1] "The Jesus of History." By T. R. Glover.

CHAPTER VIII

ORPHEUS OF CRIPPLEDOWN

ONE of the charms of such a pilgrimage as we are now making lies, I think, in the variety of Londoners to which it introduces us. We turn the page upon Sir Galahad, shining with moral idealism, and come straight into the presence of Orpheus, soft with sentimentalism.

This Orpheus is as different from H. and George Driver as anything you can imagine, as different from them as they were different from George Acorn and William Orsman; nevertheless, the same influence which changed the lives of those men changed also the life of Mr. F.—this Orpheus of affliction. Perhaps it is not altogether a wanton notion that one may learn in this various psychology as much sound and solid theology as more studious men more painfully acquire in a solitude which is seemingly a little selfish. However that may be, here is Mr. F., dark and stumpy, laughing and eloquent, waiting to tell you his sentimental story.

To look at him in his fur-collared overcoat, with his hand spread to a cheerful fire, and his smiling face turned over his shoulder to take rather cunning stock of you, you might set him down for a Portuguese nobleman or an Italian Minister of State come to England for a little coal and a little loan. For he is dark of hue, a trifle oily in the skin, with dark prominent and infinitely human eyes, the longish and curly hair dark also, the nose somewhat Jewishly hooked, and his moustache and imperial turning

a reluctant iron-grey. He is short, broad-shouldered, and thick-set, with such an excess of mental energy as makes all his movements jerky, and all his locution dramatic; a little man, marvellously quick in the uptake, sunning over with content, completely businesslike, and yet as sentimental as a recitation.

It is when he speaks that you forget Portugal and Italy. The first word he utters tells you in an instant, no birth-certificate needed, that he is authentic London. What a voice it is!—husky with a thousand London particulars, deep with the depths of London's matchless miseries, and kindly with all the cheerful, loving, and domestic charity of London's poor; what an accent, too!—an accent never to be learned, but born with a man, drunk in with his mother's milk, and only clipped into an absolute perfection by those games of the pavement in which the childhood of London first asserts itself, learning that quickness in retort, provided it be accompanied with a fierce face, clenched fist, and a stamping boot, is better than a sound case or proficiency in the mere logic of the schools. My heart leapt up at the first sound of this deep, hoarse, kindly voice; the first homely accents of Mr. F. were like music in my ears. For a Cockney is the finest story-teller in the world.

"Well," I said, "you have had a strange history."

"You may say so!" he replied. He made a wry face for a moment, blew the ash from his cigarette, and then laughing, spoke of London as he remembered it in the 'sixties. A different London now!—Ah, he should think so! Changed? Not half. Presently we got to his own story, which he unfolded to me with a most engaging frankness and a constant excursion into sentimentality which is the very soul of him.

Orpheus of Crippledown

"I was the son of caretakers," he said, "which means that my parents were respectable but not pushers. I think on father's side we weren't too fond of work. We liked taking care of other people who did work. But we could be trusted, and that was something. The premises we took care of were in Clerkenwell, big premises, with a lot of valuable stock. We were no good at making our own fortunes, but jolly good at looking after other people's. The firm thought a lot of father (I don't think!) and paid him according—the family could just live and nothing more. It was a tight time they told me afterwards. But, my word, when father went it was a lot tighter. I should say! Father died, and among his legacies left me behind —a baby on the way. The firm said to mother: 'Mrs. F., we're willing that you should keep on, but we can't have a baby; when it's born, put it in the workhouse and we'll see what we can do to pay you same as we paid your deceased husband.' That's what the firm said to mother. Mother was provided for if she'd get rid of a coming incumbrance. Mother said to the firm: 'I'd rather die than any babe of mine should go to the workhouse.' That was mother all over. Oh, she was a rare one, mother was! I reckon her a grand woman. Courage!—my word, she had the heart of a lion. Out she went from the caretaking, with scarcely a penny in the world, to earn her living as best she could, just because she wouldn't part with the last of a family already a jolly sight too big for comfort. Wonderful woman! Years after, when I got up in the world, I used to drive her about London in a cab; nothing she liked more than that; and a friendly cabman did it for me on the cheap. Many a ride we had together, mother and me, she putting her dear old worn face to the window, looking out at the houses, and telling

of all the changes she'd seen in London, talking of old times, but never once letting on that it was my coming that put her as near the workhouse door as any human being can get without dropping in. But one day it all came out. She was dying. Mother lay dying. She couldn't go for no more rides. She couldn't even sit up in her chair by the fireside. She lay in her old bed, mother did, dying slowly, peacefully, sweetly. And one day when I popped in to see her, she called me back just as I was going and asked me if I was prospering. 'Yes, mother,' I says, 'I'm paying my way all right if I'm not exactly as rich as Lord Rothschild'; and then she told me to come quite close to her, and when I'd put down my head, she said to me (and I shall never forget the words): 'Well, Harry my boy,' mother said to me, 'when you were born there was just three-ha'pence in the house, and only half a crown coming in from your brother George; but God has never forsaken me; there has always been bread in the house.' Those were mother's words. I can hear her voice just as she said them. And many's the time I've thought of them since. Three-ha'pence in the house, and only half a crown coming in regular. That was mother's world when I was born."

Mr. F. was very naturally overcome by the memory of these words, and as he paused I made haste to find a new outlet for his narrative.

I spoke of the wonderful devotion of poor women in London, and, after saying that this deep family affection seemed to be independent of religious influences, inquired if his mother had been of a religious disposition.

"Mother," he replied, brightening up, "went to a Roman Catholic School, but she was turned out for buying a Bible. She used to tell us, talking of religion, that she

wanted to furrage it out for herself. That was mother's character. She was independent. She believed in trusting to herself. I should call mother a good Christian woman. The first book I ever remember"—his large eyes became tender—"was a little 'Life of Christ,' which was full of pictures, and which had got so pulled about, and dog's-eared and torn, that mother had stuck the pages on to linen. She used to show us the pictures of an evening, and tell us stories about Jesus. I can see it now—see the little book, the crowd of us round mother, with the lamp on the table, and the supper things all washed and put away. That was mother's religion. She loved Jesus and she believed in prayer. But think of what her life was! She had five of us to feed. And all the money she could count on was half a crown a week from my eldest brother, and he a nipper. She got a shilling once a week by going to a place where she and others did sewing with a lady reading to them, and mother used to say that that was the easiest shilling she ever earned. Then she did a little charing at the Patent Office—hard work, but it earned her a shilling or two. We little ones used to go and meet her. Yes, we never let mother come home alone. Outside the Patent Office, every day she was there, there were we at the door, waiting for her, a lot of little kiddies in rags, and with faces as black as a sweep's. But mother loved to see us; it cheered her up on the walk home to have us with her; and on a foggy night it was a bit of an adventure for us. I don't suppose there was a happier family in London, poor as we were, and never knowing when the landlord would turn us out. But it was all mother. She kept tugging us all together with her heart-strings."

He told me how they managed to get food, for the

money coming in was not sufficient to pay both landlord and baker.

"There was a hotel in Charterhouse Square which used to give away food to deserving people. The porter handed out tickets, and anyone who got a ticket could go and get the food. Mother always sent us with a pillow-slip as white as snow; she'd wash it herself, and she'd tell us to be sure and keep it clean. Mother was wonderful particular. The heavier the slip when we started back home the better we were pleased! You can guess that, can't you? My word, but sometimes we wanted every crumb and scrap we could shake out of that pillow-slip."

Another of this heroic mother's virtues was faith in education. The children were sent to that famous Ragged School in Clerkenwell called the Lamb and Flag, to which Judge Payne devoted so much of his care and benevolence. Clerkenwell, be it remembered, was in those days a dense neighbourhood of crooked alleys and narrow courts stuffed just as full as ever they could hold with direst poverty.

"It was in that Ragged School," says Mr. F., "that music came to me. I shall never forget it. The year was 1869. I seemed to get right into a new world from the very start. Sing! I sang as if I would burst! And I sang all the way home, fell asleep singing to myself, and dreamed of singing. Talk about art! That was real art to take a little ragged urchin clean out of himself and fill him with all sorts of longings and dreams. I suppose I must have had something of a voice, for I was put on to sing in a church choir, and afterwards, in 1872, I took part in a cantata. That was a field day in my life, that was. I didn't half think I was the biggest chap alive! Oh, it was fine—a real taste of real glory. I picked up other things at the Ragged School—reading,

writing and ciphering; but it was music I gave myself up to. Music seemed to eat me up, seemed to consume me. Mother sent me to the national school and kept me there till I was eleven. I kept singing all the time. Then she had to put me out in the world. And what do you think happened? Blessed if I wasn't taken on in a musical instrument place in Charterhouse Street! Wasn't that a coincidence? Me with music in my soul, shoved straight into a music shop. My job was to dust the instruments, sweep the floors, tidy up, and run errands. But I had time enough when no one was looking to pick out the scales on a piano. That's how I got the sack. They didn't like my touch! They liked *me* all right, but my music was too much for them. They told me they'd give me an extra shilling a week if I wouldn't play the piano! Well, I tried not to. I did really. But it was like fighting against nature. I couldn't help myself. Music was in me, and out it had to come. *Tum-tum-tum!* I was at it whenever I got the chance. I'd open the piano halfway, pick out a tune, and start humming as if I was all alone in a house of my own. So that's how I got my marching orders."

One of his brothers possessed a little harmonium, but, because of him, it was kept locked. Mr. F., however, listening to the arguments of his brother and sister over the theory of music, would so often, as he expresses it, chime in and put them right that at last, being at this time fourteen years of age, he was allowed to play on this priceless possession. His joy, he tells me, cannot be expressed in language.

His next experience of the commercial world was in a leather warehouse, the smell of which is an essential ingredient of the Clerkenwell atmosphere. Here he

would have died of disgust but for a cheerful disposition, his church choir, the recreations of the Ragged School, and the high excitements of a choral society to which he had been admitted a member.

"After that," he says, laughing—"and let me tell you I was a bit of a rolling-stone, I went into the bookbinding business, and, when I was tired of that, tried my hand in another affair altogether—the Singer Sewing Machine Company. But all this time I was singing and playing, and lending a hand at the Ragged School out of gratitude for what it had done for me. I loved the little kiddies. It was fine to get among them. So I used to go there, and Providence meant that I should go there. For it was at the Ragged School that I came across Mr. Shorey. And from that moment life took a different turn for me."

This Mr. Shorey was an American who came over to England with the idea of destroying vermin, and discovered something of which he had never heard before—namely, the crippled child of the London slums. He seems to have combined in the capacious theatre of his American mind a deadly, passionless, and relentless hatred of rats, mice, bugs, fleas, lice, and other distressing accompaniments of terrestrial existence, with the very softest and tenderest benevolence towards suffering childhood. He came to England with the idea of enriching himself by the destruction of rats, mice, bugs, fleas, etc., and having established his business and made a very promising start in this direction, he was thinking about returning to his native country when, knocking up against the Shaftesbury Society, he stumbled across the crippled child of the London slums. From that moment Mr. Shorey balanced his remorseless animosity against ver-

min with a most unselfish devotion towards the crippled children of our London poor.

One of his great ideas was that these children must be given joy—joy and beauty. He did not stop at relieving their most pressing and material necessities; he wanted to find for them an escape from their suffering and solitude. It was the solitude of the afflicted child which touched the heart of the Rev. J. Reid Howatt twenty years ago, and led him to establish, with the help of Sir John Kirk and the Ragged School Union, that noble society which calls itself the Crutch and Kindness League. The idea of this league, which has numbered twenty-five thousand members, is to bring the well-off child into friendly relation with the crippled child; letters are written, friendship is established, and sometimes the two children meet. At the back of this league is compassion for the awful solitude of the crippled slum child, whose whole life is sometimes spent in a dull corner of a back room. And it was this awful solitude which moved the heart of Mr. Shorey.

Acquaintance with Mr. F., who was working in the Ragged Schools, and who was still music-mad, led eventually to the idea of a Cripples' Choir. Mr. Shorey had a passionate faith in music. He took our Orpheus into his vermin-destruction business, taught him all there was to know about beneficent poison, and started with him the first beginnings of a Cripples' Choir. Then, being called back to America, this good gentleman made over his business to the Ragged School Union, and with blessings on the poor little heads of London's crippled children departed for New York. But his work was done. Ever since that day Mr. F. has managed the vermin-destruction business, and has devoted all the rest of his time to

teaching the crippled children of London to sing beautiful music.

"Yes," said Mr. F., "it's now eighteen years ago since I conducted the first Cripples' Choir of three hundred voices in the Queen's Hall. We make that choir one of the chief items in the programme of our annual meeting. It's my work, when business is over for the day, to slip round to all the schools where a choir exists and prepare them for the big event of the year. And it's wonderful work. I dare say I'm soft-hearted, but that's not the same thing as soft-headed, is it?—not quite!—but really and truly it brings a lump into the throat to see those poor little deformed children singing with all their tiny might—little pinched faces, little crooked spines, little hollow chests, and eyes in the pinched faces that are old and big with suffering! I'd rather have my job than any other. I'm a sort of a fairy! I am really. There are thousands of crippled children in London, living in dark streets, suffering pain most of the day and most of the night, many of them with only a few years to live, thousands of them, who look forward to my coming just as if I was a fairy, or at any rate some sort of a magician. I teach them to sing! Wonderful! They can sing! They learn the words, they learn the music, and then they sing. These little cripples sing. Yes, and sing well. They do really. Some are better than others, but many of them sing with a proper understanding. And the stories I could tell you!"

He jerks his head, and plunges into one of these many tales: "I'm down in the East End. In the Cripples' Parlour. I've just finished rehearsal. A teacher comes to me. There's a little girl going into the London Hospital for an operation. She wants to know whether she'll be allowed to sing at the Queen's Hall if she practises in the

hospital. I go to the child and tell her, Yes, certainly, my dear, you shall sing at the Queen's Hall. She goes into the hospital. The music was Sullivan's *Little feet are passing*. She lies there singing it. She gets the nurse to hear her say the words. Every day she practises. But she gets worse. The day for the concert comes and she's worse still. She lies very quiet. You can think of the little heart—breaking! For a long time she says nothing. Then she asks the nurse to read the words: 'Little feet are passing.' It was just the very time when we were singing it in Queen's Hall—three hundred happy little cripples flushed with happiness and excitement. When the nurse had finished she looks at the child. But those little feet had passed into the next world."

There is a pause, and then Mr. F. begins again:

"Another time, I go to Battersea. I finish rehearsal. I'm in a hurry to get off elsewhere. One of the workers comes up. 'Can you spare a minute?' she asks. 'Don't stop me to-night,' I say, 'I've got a rehearsal at Walworth.' 'You must hear this,' she says, 'rehearsal or no rehearsal.' 'What is it?' I ask, 'something serious? Who's died and left me a fortune?' And then she told me. There was a poor little child who'd begged hard to be allowed to sing—

"There's a fold both safe and happy
Where the little ones may dwell"

at a party in Beckenham. She was a bad pneumonia child, and just before the party came off she was very ill. I didn't want to let her go. It wasn't because I thought she'd disgrace us; it was because I thought it might be bad for her. But the teacher had said to me, 'What does it matter? Nothing can save her. And if she doesn't go,

she'll die of a broken heart. Let her die happy. It's the one thing she has been longing for. Don't disappoint the poor little mite.' So we agreed that she should go. And now I am told the end of the story. She went to that party, said the worker, a dying child; she sang her message: 'There's a fold both safe and happy'—sang it like an inspired angel, never been so happy in her life, and then back she went to her Battersea slum, closed her eyes, and entered that fold. Oh, I could tell you endless stories like that—stories of the joy music brings to these poor children, a joy that seems to get right into the very soul of them, and helps them out of this world and into a better world. It softens them too; it softens the very roughest, so you may be sure it would soften the most fractious. Music hath charms!

"Take Bermondsey. Now they're a rougher lot down there than in the East End. I'm not speaking of cripples; I'm speaking of the ordinary boys, the lads, the lambs, of the district. When I first went there teaching them music I had a regular lot of young hooligans to deal with. You never saw such a lot. No boots, but all wore gloves—soap and water, I found, could get those gloves off. Dirty! You never saw such dirt. But gradually music and kindness tamed them. One night I and Mrs. F. were coming away in the dark from the Ragged School. It was cold, I remember, dark and cold. We were stopped by a lad. He had something in his hand done up in a bit of rough paper. He came up sheepishly and handed it to Mrs. F. 'It's the first bit I've done,' he said, and went off. Inside that paper we found a nice piece of fretwork. Now that boy was humanised by music. Music had reached him, got through the husk and the rind of him, got into his heart. We have made friends, Mrs. F. and I,

with hundreds of such lads. They come to see us. They tell us their troubles. And some of them we've seen grow up into regular heroes.

"I'll tell you a real wonderful story, just to show what can be done with the very worst instance. Family about as bad as you'll find. Home, a cellar. This cellar was pitch dark, and whenever it rained water came oozing up through the stones. Smelt like a well. Drink had brought them there and drink kept them there. Father and mother both drunkards. Well, a Ragged School gets hold of the four children, three brothers and one sister. Superintendent of Ragged School sees that he has got hold of a wonderful family. Does everything he can for them. All four as bright as buttons. Never seen quicker, cleverer children. One of them stuttered. He'd start speaking, and you'd jump back, calling out: 'Here, stop it! You're spitting at me.' One boy had a bad twist in his nature. He got into crime. He was caught, tried, and sent to prison. Superintendent met him when he came out. 'Now,' he says, 'you've got to begin all over again.' And he takes him to a factory, gets him a good job, and every blessed night of the week meets that boy at the factory gates and takes him home with him. He used to play draughts, chess, and cribbage with the lad just to keep his mind off crime. That's devotion for you!—real honest, genuine devotion. And that boy becomes a foreman salesman, and now he's the manager of the business. No prison taint about him! And what about the others? Why, one of them is in the Indian Civil Service, another is managing director of a big traction affair in New York, and the sister married a doctor, and now she drives about in his broo-ham. How's that for a record? Doesn't that make you feel it's worth trying to help the very worst?"

The Little that is Good

Mr. F. laughed with the sheer joy of his story.

"All that the world wants to put it straight," he says, "is a little kindness. Well, not a little kindness, but a lot of kindness. You've got to stick at it; you mustn't say die; you mustn't give in; you must go on trying: kindness and patience—that's the medicine. I've seen enough to know that the roughest and worst can be turned. You've got to get at their softness. Everybody's got a soft spot in his nature. None is so hard but there isn't that tender spot somewhere if only you can find it. Oh, it takes a bit of finding sometimes, I'll grant you that. Even a crippled child may be hard and fractious. They're not all little angels. No, not by a long chalk, they aren't. Still, I know this, from more than twenty years' experience, that in most children there's a soft spot, and that soft spot once reached you've got the child, got him for the rest of his natural."

This may be described as the religion of Orpheus—this faith that in the hardest and worst of us there is a heel of Achilles at which, if sentiment aim its arrows with a good eye, a prisoner may be made for God. From the bubbling depths of his good-nature rises this faith of Mr. F. with an absolute assurance. He'll have no man so bad that softness can't save him. It is a part of his happiness that he should hold this faith, and that he should love the sentiment of tears. At one moment he is laughing over a Cockney joke, at the next weeping over a pathetic tale. And he enjoys the one as much as the other. There is a fine exorbitance in his nature. He is a true artist.

I once caught sight of him for a moment conducting a choir of ragged children. He was a different man. Elevated above his ragamuffins by the height of a form on which he was standing, his bâton beating time in a rather

patting fashion, his left hand going up and down in sympathy, his body bent forward to the children, there was an expression on his dark face which told of a spirit lost in the wonders and mysteries of its art. At every second, without a word from his lips, his dark eyes expressed the different emotions of his mind. Now he was pleased; now he was disgusted; now he wanted to know what on earth the girls thought they were doing; now he was telling the boys that they were magnificent; now he wanted thunder; now he wanted a whisper; now he was for the speed of an express train; now for the pace of a tired snail; all this flashing like lightning from his dark Jewish eyes, with never a word spoken by his lips. And as I watched him on that occasion, above the tinkling sound of a cheap piano rose with difficulty the thin and wheezy trebles of thirty or forty little white-faced children, whose rags gave off a sensible thickness to the atmosphere of the room.

I asked him if the crippled child could sing as well as the normal child.

"No; not quite as well," he replied, "but it's wonderful what enthusiasm will do. And there's this to be remembered. The cripple, as a rule, is mentally slower. You have to be more patient with him. He's not so quick, not so clever. I find that I want twelve or fifteen rehearsals with my crippled children, where eight will do for my normal choirs. Ah, but it's worth the extra trouble! To see a great choir of crippled children singing like angels, that's enough happiness for any man. And it does them good physically. Yes, that's part of the business. Mr. Openshaw of the London Hospital told me that the top A is better than all his physic. Ah, there's a man for you! Who knows what he has done for the crippled children of London? Where is that tale told? Wonderful how

the best is kept hidden and quiet! Why, the brain of that great man is devoted out of sheer human love to these poor little deformities of London; he works and toils for them in the London Hospital; to save them from pain, to give them a chance, to make them happy—that's the life of him. And it's all done so quietly that nobody ever hears about it. But there'll be thousands and tens of thousands of children in heaven to welcome him with songs of love when he gets there. Ah, you may bet your life on that!"

No doubt, too, there'll be a special rehearsal of crippled children in heaven a day or two before Mr. F. lays down his bâton for the last time.

At the headquarters of the Shaftesbury Society, which is a beautiful old house in John Street, off Theobald's Road, there is a large room set apart for the organisation of the crippled children of London. The lady who presides over this department of the Society's benevolent activities has the historic air of the old house; she might have been its first tenant (in the days of John Adam), who was, I am sure, an excellent manager, an authority on the Scriptures, and a firm believer in herbs. She reminds me a little of Betsey Trotwood, and certainly her grimness is as deceptive as that lady's.

This Miss Coles—white-haired, spectacled, erect, and clothed in black—has an experience of East London which is probably unique, going back as it does before the days of General and Mrs. Booth, Dr. Barnardo, and many other missions which are now reckoned as old-stagers. Miss Coles, whose appearance and manner might suggest that she has no patience with Mr. F.'s gospel of softness, and with whom brief acquaintance might convey the impression

LADY KIRK

MRS. HARRISON

BARONESS BURDETT-COUTTS

MRS. BAYLEY

MISS COLES

SOME WOMEN WORKERS OF THE SHAFTESBURY SOCIETY

that she is a masterly organiser, careful of every farthing, and not easily to be taken in, is in reality one of the kindest of people in the world and immensely courageous. She has stormed lodging-houses in Ratcliff when they were probably the worst houses in the world, she has invaded public-houses in days when violence and brutality were general to East London, and she has gone into foul courts and perilous alleys seeking to save the lowest of the low. "Ah, those were the days when Christianity really was aggressive!" she exclaims, and I feel perfectly certain she thinks poorly of present days. If there is a look of grim resolution and challenging oppugnance in her face, it does not come from hardness of heart. It is the expression of an old and gallant warrior of God—one who has fought many a hard sweet battle, and wishes she were fifty years younger to begin it all over again.

Miss Coles, I suppose, is the supreme authority in London as to its crippled children. She it was who started many years ago in her own house in East London what she called a parlour for crippled children, feeding these poor mites, playing with them, teaching them, helping them to be brave and patient. Out of that parlour has grown all over London what is known as the Cripples' Parlour—a movement for providing happy entertainments for crippled children in houses of the well-to-do or in the premises of the Ragged School Union. Yes, Miss Coles is a supreme authority, with a very long experience at her back. She stands in the centre of her big room in 32, John Street, where you can scarcely turn about for tables and boxes, cupboards and cabinets, and tells you exactly how many cripples there are in Notting Dale or West Ham, what the ages are of the cripples in Hoxton or Tooting, and what is being done next week

for all the cripples of London put together. This is not exaggeration.

She pulls out a long drawer full of coloured tickets arranged in the form of a card-index. You notice that the colour which predominates is blue, and remark upon it. "The blue," she says, "is East London," and snaps up the drawer. Another drawer is pulled open. "Here we have the crippled children," says Miss Coles, "not in localities, but alphabetically. Seven thousand of them. Reports are always coming in from our visitors, paid and voluntary." I asked to see the card of a crippled child with whose story I have been familiar for some five or six years. In a second it was produced. The whole story of the child was there on a card, with various references to reports kept elsewhere.

"We know all about our seven thousand cripples. Nothing escapes us. Their health, the condition of their homes, the state of their parents—we know everything."

I looked at this drawer with a good deal of feeling, in spite of Miss Coles. "Here," said I, in a tone which would have commended itself to Mr. F., perhaps have brought tears to his lustrous eyes, "is a drawer-full of cripples—the crippled childhood of London packed tight into this one long drawer. Seven thousand little crippled children—seven thousand of them! If we could but know the whole human history of each little ticket in the drawer, what a volume that would be of heroism and patience!"

"Here's another interesting drawer," said Miss Coles, shooting that one back, and jerking out another. "This is our card-index of colonials who write to London cripples."

"You astonish me," I exclaimed.

"Not only colonials," she said, pulling out another drawer; "foreigners as well." She looked at the two long

drawers with apparent satisfaction. "Yes, all over the Empire and elsewhere we have friends who write regularly to our London cripples. These two drawers, for instance, represent Australia, Tasmania, Canada, Ceylon, China, Japan, Palestine, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, and the Channel Islands. Letters are always passing from these places to the little rooms where our cripples live; and not only letters; sometimes parcels—particularly Christmastime and birthdays. You'd be surprised to see the letters that come to us. For instance," shutting both drawers and wheeling round to one of the tables, "here's a letter came this morning." She handed me the letter and stood watching me as I read.

This letter announced that a signalman on board H.M.S. —— would be glad to correspond with a crippled child in London.

When we had finished with letters and card-indexes, reports and pigeon-holes, statistics and cupboards, we settled down to a psychological conversation. I wanted to learn from this consummate authority something about the psychology of crippled children. In this conversation the real Miss Coles occasionally showed herself.

"A crippled child," said Miss Coles, without an instant's hesitation, and with a certain aggressiveness which I take to be defensive, like the soldier's humour, as if she detected in me a desire to trip her up, "is more sensitive, more easily pleased, and more serious than other children. I am speaking generally. With our poor cripples this is almost always the case. The weight of poverty, the burden of life, presses on them when young. They seldom quite get over that. The patience wears thin, disappears. Getting older, they revolt. I'm speaking generally. They revolt, and they are not so easy to manage. You can

watch character deteriorating. This is when they are seeking self, and it is most important to look after them then with wisdom and affection. Later, when they come to leave school, either the spirit of revolt develops very quickly, ending in a sullen and disagreeable disposition, or character improves slowly and strugglingly. The misshapen and imbecile cripples are disappearing; early medical treatment and better hospitals have effected that reform; and a very good thing too. Those children were the easy prey of all that is evil; they had no morals; they were a source of contagion; and where parents were attached to them they were worn out by them. But they've gone. You hardly see a specimen now. It's a different Crippledom altogether from what it was thirty or forty years ago."

I asked her if the children accepted the general teachings of religion easily and naturally.

Miss Coles became very keen. A warm colour came into her cheeks. Her eyebrows went up into her forehead. Her eyes shone.

"It's religion," she said, "which saves these children from mental deterioration. But you have to watch your age and study your surroundings. I myself am very keen on the thirteen one." (That is to say, the cripple who is thirteen years of age.) "It's just before they leave school that you want to catch them. *That's* your opportunity. You've got to make them *for* religion then, or you will find it more difficult later. Religion should be made definite. At sixteen, if he's against it, he's more against it. Some cripples become out-and-out atheists. You never can tell. They are very curious and very interesting. Taken young, treated with affection, and handled wisely, they may become as good as anybody else; but we must

never forget that they *are* different, that they *are* difficult, and that they require constant helping."

"Are many of them lovable?" I asked, thinking that I was getting well into her practical and expert atmosphere.

"Lovable!" she exclaimed, looking at me as if she'd like to knock my head off my shoulders. "Lovable! Our crippled children! Why, they're the dearest little mites under heaven. I should say they were lovable! Some of them have got the sweetest hearts imaginable, and the way they bear pain is a lesson to all of us, and to see some of them in their miserable back rooms or dark basements is to see real heroism, real valour, and to learn a wonderful lesson in humility. Oh, yes indeed; I should think they were lovable. I wish I was half as good and half as lovable as most of our crippled children. But, I confess, unless they have got religion to help them, they are apt to deteriorate when they grow up. As children they're perfect. But as they grow older you must watch their minds. No amount of State aid can help them from thirteen to sixteen. It's then that they choose Christ or turn their backs on religion. It's a dark life for the cripple who tries to do without God. There's a hardness about him, a bitterness, a maliciousness, which is very terrible. The great thing is to watch over them from thirteen to sixteen, making Christ absolutely *real* to them. That's the thing. That's the great thing. And that's what we try to do with our seven thousand cripples."

So the vast Crippledom of London is both organised and enchanted by the Shaftesbury Society. Miss Coles, invisible to them, bending over her reports and referring to her card-index, is seeing that they have nourishing food, warm clothes, surgical appliances, bath-chairs, proper attention, and all the benefits of State legislation; seeing,

too, that they go for summer holidays to the seaside, with trained nurses to look after them. This is the work of the invisible Miss Coles. And once a week or so little Mr. F. appears among the cripples, brisk and smiling, hoarse and chaffing, gay and humming, to waft their little souls into a fairy realm of enchantment by a few magic beats with his bâton.

And thus, I venture to think, in all the departments of our social organism, organising genius should go hand in hand with art.

CHAPTER IX

COAL HOUSE POINT

He whose story I am about to tell is a man of middle-life, and when I first saw him I took him to be a Commissioner in the Indian Civil Service home on leave, a man of refinement and good breeding engaged in foreign service, who is used to governing and to obedience.

He is dark-haired and dark-skinned; a tall and upright man, with something of a soldier's carriage and trimness of appearance. He has a thoughtful and reflective sternness of expression. There is visible evidence in his face of mental energy, quickness of thought, power of command, and great driving force; but it goes with something which is profoundly calm and restful, something which looks steadily and reflects deeply. I can imagine him sitting in one of the law courts in India, unwearied by the eloquence of a Babu, his eyes fixed upon the prisoner, his mind set upon justice.

It is remarkable that the voice of this man should be an entirely cultured voice with no hint or suggestion of London slums or a boyhood passed without real education. I have never before encountered a man of his origin whose voice was so entirely and absolutely the voice of an educated person.

Not so remarkable, of course, but still in its way a notable expression of the man's mind is the fashion of his raiment. He was dressed in the very pleasantest of brown tweeds, everything about him undeniably clean

and spruce, without ostentation of any kind. In everything, his subdued manner included, he suggests the Sahib.

It was amazing to sit looking at this very agreeable man, and hear him telling, with only one second's break into deep emotion, the story of such a childhood, his childhood, as one might hear without surprise and only with great pity from the lips of some broken and degraded man who complains that he has never had a chance.

William Heal, for such is his name, was the eldest child in a family of eight. His parents were respectable, and at one time fairly prosperous. Alcoholism in the father was responsible for the downfall of the family. The only school attended by William—and this is perhaps one of the most remarkable facts in his biography as the reader, I think, will agree when he comes to read the man's written account of his life—was a Ragged School in Kentish Town; and he attended this school only for a few years in his extreme childhood. Before he was nine years of age he ran away from home and lived among navvies. Except for this early experience of a school, and later on the training he received in various Sunday-schools, William Heal is a self-educated man.

We shall see later on that the determining influence in his life was General Gordon, and that from Gordon he received an impetus towards a life of such fineness and truth as would necessarily urge him towards mental culture; but beyond the Ragged School he attended in childhood and the Sunday-schools he attended in youth, William Heal had no other grounding in education. His knowledge has grown with reading, but his reading has been directed by a mind which must have had from the

very first a right instinct in this matter and very considerable powers of observation.

At my request Mr. Heal wrote for me the following brief account of his earliest memories:

> The first thing that I remember was a garden in which I used to play. I can remember the grass and the flowers quite well, also the garden chair into which I used to snuggle for a sleep. This was the garden of my first home—the garden that I left when I was three years of age. My mother thought it was impossible for me to remember it, because I was brought away so young; but I described it to her so minutely that she had to admit that somehow or the other it had impressed itself upon my baby brain. I can remember nothing whatever of the house or furniture, but the garden and the things therein, together with the forms of my father and mother, are vividly portrayed. This was the first home that the drink stole from me.
>
> The next thing that fixed itself upon my memory was a room, in a corner of which I was lying in a made-up bed upon the floor. I remember watching my mother stitching by the light of a candle that stood upon a tall brass candlestick. As I watched her working I saw that she was crying. I remember getting up from my bed to go and fondle her—she kissed me and put me back in bed. I do not know how old I was, neither do I know aught of the tragedy that lurked behind the tears.
>
> Later on, I remember, we lived in a downstairs room, the door of which opened to a narrow area in which I sometimes took the air. Maybe as a child I

played there, but I do not remember doing so—I was a child without a childhood. In this place I had a dangerous illness—diphtheria I think it must have been, for I remember my father holding me in his arms whilst the doctor put the handle of a spoon down my throat to clear it; at least, that is my impression; it may have been one of his instruments, but I feel sure that it was a spoon.

My father was a clever man and, when himself, a kindly one; he would steadily work and make a home, then a fit of madness would take possession of him, and six months' work would be smashed up in a night. Drink affects different people in different ways—it affected him in the worst way possible—it made him a madman and a—but there, poor fellow, he's been dead this many a day, and, after all, I am his son and not his judge; he happened to be one of the tempted, but not one of the strong; one does not know how hard he struggled before he was beaten by the curse.

I don't know whether all children suffer as I used to suffer at these times. The shame of the thing was worse than the blow. I was met by some children one evening; they greeted me with the cry: "Billy, your father's drunk again." The shame of it was more than I could bear; I ran and hid myself and cried enough to break my heart. It would not have been so hard to bear if we could have kept it to ourselves; but there was no way of covering or hiding it. There it was for all our little world to see and wonder at; it was hard for us children, but it was doubly hard for mother. She was one of the sweetest of women, and one of the bravest. How she was able to bear it all, God only knows. Whatever father did or said,

she would never let us say a word against him. I believe she loved him through it all, and continued to love him until she died. The ways of women are like the ways of God—they are past finding out.

Religion was a real thing to my mother. Through all those tragic years she never lost faith in her God—in His good time it would all end; in the meantime daily strength and grace would be given. She taught us to say our prayers, and made us say, 'Dear God, bless Dada'—even whilst the bruise was still green and blue upon her shoulder or her cheek.

She set my lessons as a little chap, teaching me to read and write in a simple way. When I grew a little older I would run her errands; later on I found a simple job—I delivered a few papers for a small tradesman, for which he gave me sixpence a week. I can see that sixpence now—I changed it into coppers before I took it home; six pennies seemed so very much more than the small silver coin. I know that I felt very proud as I placed them one by one in her worn thin hand, and I thought that her troubles would soon be over now that I had started work.

Soon I changed to another place where they paid me half a crown a week, and so I passed on from job to job.

Reaching home one night I found that the old trouble was once more there; once again our home was wrecked. What I said I do not remember, but my father struck at me—my mother rushed between me and the blow; it smashed her to the floor; then like a little fury I sprang at him. He was a man mad with the damnable drink; I was a child. He won. Flung out broken and bleeding, I cried out to him:

"When I am big enough I'll kill you!" and I meant it. I know that it was all very horrible and wrong, but not until you have seen your mother lie broken and bloody upon the floor will you quite understand.

I must interrupt his narrative at this point to say that when he came to describe to me this last terrible conflict in his home, his composure deserted him for a moment, and for a moment he lost his self-control. He had not told me as fully as he has here written the reason for his leaving home, and I stopped him with the question.

"But I don't quite understand what it was that led you to run away."

He replied, after a moment, "I simply could not stand seeing my father strike my mother"; and then, with uncontrollable feeling, his fist clenched, and his eyes full of sudden pain, he burst out, "I could have killed him!" It was a moment or two before he was able to continue our conversation. I was struck by the passion of a nature so quiet and composed at the memory of an incident some forty years old.

Mr. Heal continues:

Thus it was that I left home. I was not much more than eight—certainly not nine. There were no School Boards in those days—no age limits, and child though I was I managed to get a job with a large contractor. I was placed amongst navvies to give checks to carmen as they brought in or carted things away; at other times I carried tools to the smithy to be sharpened, or ran errands for the men. I made the fires to warm their tea or cook their steaks, and was just responsive to their beck and call. There were other boys about the works, boys that could curse and swear

like troopers; saucy young rascals for the most part, and full of mischief and monkey tricks. They were usually unwilling to obey the men, and there always seemed war between them. The men would chase them and curse them, and consign them body and soul to hell and eternal perdition; and the boys would respond in much the same strain. Poor little beggars, it was a rough school for them; not that they were unhappy, they were as jolly as sandboys; but the end of it—who knows, or cares?

Whatever other faults I possessed I was never saucy or unwilling. What I was asked to do I did if it was any way possible, and it paid me to do my best for them, though I can honestly say that the question of pay never entered my thoughts, but week by week upon pay day many of the men would fling me a penny or maybe two; thus it was that even with my scanty wage I could pay my lodge, buy my clothes, and live. For about two years I passed my days and nights with these rough but kindly men, and the debt I owe them I can never repay. Yes, they were coarse men, many of them—I know all about the lusting and the drink—but I also know that when I was wellnigh dead they nursed me back to life, and a muck-begrimed old navvy was not only my nurse but my saviour.

After this formidable experience the runaway boy heard of a job at Coal House Point on the Thames, near Gravesend, and thither, at the age of ten, entirely homeless and entirely friendless, he made his way in search of daily bread.

He tells me that the memory of his mother was still

strong and powerful in his soul. He knew from her teaching, knew also by those instincts of his nature which had fed upon her devotion, that there is all the difference in the world between right and wrong. Because he was homeless and friendless he had no thought of going to the devil. He was without definite ambition, he had no real thought of setting the Thames on fire, but he did want to do well at his work. And this desire, strengthened by the memory of his mother, determined him to be a good boy and not a bad boy, saved him among the roughest of men from falling into evil ways, kept him fresh and pure, steadied him as he trudged to this new job, and prepared him at this new job for the great experience which was to befall him there.

There is real romance in this part of his narrative, as it were a chapter out of "David Copperfield," or even out of one of Marryat's novels: the little homeless boy often bidding good-bye to his navvy friends at the end of a "mucky job," and setting off solitary and friendless in the hope of work at Coal House Point on the Thames. And what romance at Coal House Point! For it was here that the runaway child encountered perhaps the most chivalrous and beautiful figure in the whole world at that time, the most English Don Quixote of all our history, and in some ways I dare to think the most faithful of Christ's disciples in modern days. That meeting between the soldier and the child was the turning point, absolute and decisive, in the boy's life. From that meeting everything which follows can be traced, up to the man's wholesome goodness and scrupulous sense of honour at the present moment, a quarter of a century after Gordon's death.

For six years Gordon taught in the Ragged School at

Coal House Point

Gravesend. A tablet on the wall commemorates this lowly service of the national hero, and every year, on Gordon Day, a pilgrimage is made to this school by those officials of the Shaftesbury Society who "remember Gordon."

From an article written by Mr. Heal for *The Brotherhood Journal,* entitled "General Gordon as I Knew Him," I take the following passages:

> I was ten, and the world had never been kind to me; ten, yet for two years I had been earning my bread—paying my lodging, buying my clothes, and getting my grub with what I could earn. A poor neglected little beggar; neither Church nor State seemed to have very much concern for me. What did it matter? I was only a friendless little kid; no one cared—until he came. He saw me, and he cared; and because he cared, the best that is in me belongs to him.
>
> At the time he met me he was known as "Chinese Gordon," and his praise was in everyone's mouth. He, the ever-victorious leader, had recently returned from his great conquest in China, having put down the great Rebellion there—that rebellion that the Chinese Government had been powerless to quell. China's fairest provinces were under a tyrant's heel; cruelty and despotism reigned supreme in their soul. In their despair they called to Gordon, and Gordon responded. They gave him a fear-stricken mob for an army, and he moulded them and trained them, and he so inspired this rabble that they became the ever-victorious army. Battle after battle was fought, but never a one was lost. His men adored him, and said that he bore a charmed life; they maintained that he was in the keeping of the gods, and could never be

harmed or defeated. Badly equipped they were—their guns and ammunition were abominable; but their leaders, he inspired them and heartened them; for him they would dare and do. Thus it was that the war was won—won by the indomitable spirit of Gordon.

After the winning they offered him honours. He refused all but one. They brought him money; he passed every penny of it on to his unpaid troops, and came back to England poorer than he had left it.

Reaching England the Lord Mayor offered him a banquet; but he shrunk from the glare of the lime-light, and refused to be fêted or praised.

Invitations poured in upon him from the great ones of our land. They wanted to lionise this clever young Colonel of Engineers, this romantic figure that loomed so large in the world's vision, this chivalrous hero that had accomplished so much. Not one invitation would he accept. What he had done he had done for humanity, not for fame.

Then as an engineer the authorities placed him in charge of the home defences, and maybe our safety to-day depends largely upon the work that he did in planning the forts and defences that all along our shores point their great guns to the sea.

It was upon one of these forts that I met him. The fort at Coal House Point was under construction, and I was waiting upon the masons that were working and setting the huge granite blocks behind which the great guns shelter and hide.

A few days after my arrival the word passed from man to man that the Colonel was about; I had no idea who the Colonel was, so I asked the man upon whom I was attending who he was.

"Who is he?" he answered. "He's the finest man in all God's earth—that's who he is." . . .

Presently I saw a gentleman walk along the staging; the engineers and clerk of the works were with him. For a time they looked at plans and discussed details; then they passed on, Gordon nodding or having a word with a man as he passed. He had a marvellous memory for faces, and as soon as he caught sight of mine he knew I was fresh on the job. He stopped and spoke to me. Where did I come from?—where was I lodging?—was I comfortable?—touched me upon my head—said: "Be a good lad," and passed on. All the rest of the day I could see his blue eyes before me, and somehow I did not feel quite so lonely when I thought of his smile. Each week I looked forward to his coming. His day was a red-letter day to us all.

Gordon was living at Fort House, Gravesend, and because I was a little fellow and he was a big-hearted one, he would ask me to spend the week-ends there. For about two years I had that joy and privilege. What times we had! A number of the boys lived there altogether—rough young scamps some of them—but his kindly Scotch housekeeper had but little trouble with them, rough as they were. "Do you wish me to speak to the Colonel about you?" she would say. That was enough; not that Gordon would be angry; far worse—he would be pained.

Saturday afternoon would be spent with him in the garden or study. He would chat about bees or flowers, or maybe take a hand with the ball. Sometimes he would read us a story or tell us one; we would sit at his feet or rest on his shoulders whilst he talked. Ye

gods! what a sight—a hero that refused the company of princes, spending his time in the company of slum kiddies, calling them his kings because they were enthroned in his great big heart. They were happy times for us—eh! and for him—for he wrote in after years that the happiest years of his life were the years that he spent teaching the youngsters in the little Thames-side town.

Over the chimney-piece in his study hung a large map—a map dotted about with pins. Each of those pins represented a boy that Gordon had befriended. The pins were placed in spots where he assumed them to be. Some of the boys were at sea, and he followed the course of their ship as they sailed the blue waters. In our turn we were appointed to the place of honour. We stood upon a chair, and under his direction moved the pins. "Charlie was here last week," he would say. "I expect to-day he would be about here." The pin representing Charlie was moved accordingly; so he would go on until every pin was mentioned. Then he would kneel and commend to the Great Father's care every boy represented upon the map. Then he would pray for the boys that were kneeling about his knee; he would tell God your name, and somehow God would seem to be another kind of God after you had listened to his prayers. Sometimes one boy would stay behind, whilst the others went to their play. He would kindly and quietly speak to that one about the things that mattered; and thus it happened that amidst the soft shadows of the closing day a saintly soldier took the trembling hand of a friendless little lad and led him sobbing to the arms of God.

It was after reading this article that I met Mr. Heal, and most of our conversation turned upon Gordon. He told me that owing to Gordon's care for the boys and lads employed on those works there was just such a system at Coal House Point as the Young Men's Christian Association has now made famous during the present war.

"He built huts for us," said Mr. Heal, "in which we could read books and magazines, or play at draughts or dominoes. He encouraged us to read and to play games. He bought for us cricketing apparatus, chose a ground for us, and would sometimes come and watch us play. He seemed to have time for everything. He would go himself among the cottagers to arrange for the boarding of his workers, assuring himself that the moral influence would be good, visiting the lads when they were installed there, and sometimes paying the bill himself. He was always thinking of the poor and the friendless. People in the neighbourhood—squires, parsons and big farmers—would send him presents of fruit and game. He never used them for himself. We boys would be sent on Saturday with these gifts to sick people in the cottages or told to dispatch them to the hospitals. He was asked out right and left in the neighbourhood, but he never went. His whole life was given up to the poor who worked for him. His life was in us. He wanted to help us and save us from the world."

I inquired if Gordon taught these boys what is called "definite religious teaching," and if he set himself to work for their conversion.

Mr. Heal replied: "I can truly say that I was *converted* through Gordon, but I should like to make it quite clear what I mean by that word. There was no set religious meeting in which he made an emotional or a sensational

appeal to us. Our communion with him was never in the nature of a 'meeting'; it was entirely personal and conversational. I look back and remember many conversations with Gordon. Sometimes he would be sitting in a chair, with boys leaning over the back, boys at his feet, and boys sitting on either side of him; and something he was reading to us would perhaps lead him to close his book for a moment, his hand keeping the place as it lay in his lap, and set him talking to us about the power of God or the beauty of Christ. These conversations, and he was always encouraging us to ask questions, made a marked impression on our minds—they were so natural, so real, and so delightful. But the greatest impression made on my own mind came from solitary talks with him. I can never forget those talks. As long as I live they must be the greatest thing in my life. Nothing can ever exceed them. It was the power of those solitary talks which converted me. I know that owing to those words of Gordon, child as I was, I did, nevertheless, definitely give my heart to God, definitely renounce what we call 'the world,' definitely determine that I would fight my evil nature and live unselfishly. The words which impressed me were quite simple; it was the force of Gordon's personality behind them which gave them their extraordinary power. He made me feel, first of all, the meaning of that phrase, the Goodness of God. Goodness became to me, through Gordon, the most desirable of ideals. It became in God tremendously real. I seemed to feel what goodness was. I couldn't then, and I cannot now, put into words this feeling of mine for goodness. But from those days onwards I have always had the idea of absolute goodness in my mind as something which is the supreme reality of all life and the whole universe."

SOME OLD R.S.U. WORKERS

Eminent men whose philanthropic endeavours largely grew out of their work in connection with the Shaftesbury Society

I asked if Gordon had spoken of Christ's sacrifice for sin.

"Not, I think, in the ordinary Church way," he made answer. "My memory tells me that he only led us to feel that our sins, all sin, pained God, hurt Him, caused Him infinite sorrow. We fully understood, I am quite certain of this, that we had done wrong in the past, that in us was the capacity to do wrong again, and that in all our wrongdoing we had pained God. There was no thought in our minds that we had angered God. There was no thought that He would punish us for our wrongdoings. We weren't afraid of hell. But we did believe that our sins pained God, and we did desire to do good because God hungered and thirsted for goodness. Beauty and goodness were always associated in Gordon's mind. He gave us a distinct feeling that beauty and goodness went together. One thing, too, I remember: Gordon's teaching about the nature of forgiveness. All his emphasis was on love—the longing of God to forgive, and the creative power of forgiveness in the human heart. When I look back I see that Gordon humanised God. Perhaps he may have lost something of the divinity. I mean he may have failed to give us a sense of the majesty and power and infinite mystery of God. With him, at least so far as we boys were concerned, God was just a great loving father agonising, as it were, to do all that He could for His children. And that was enough theology for us. We were under the spell of Gordon's personality. We lived in the magic of his mystery—enchanted. His power over us was something that can never be expressed in words. Gordon saved us, as he saved hundreds of children in Ragged Schools, and all over the world, by making us believe in a God of love, by making us feel that goodness was a great and a

fine thing, while sin was a horrible thing, and by presenting to us in himself the very highest ideal of manhood. To a boy there could not have been a higher type of man. He was, remember, not a sad or melancholy or strict person; on the contrary, he was brightness and happiness itself—he radiated joy. But in the midst of this brightness was the central core of his soul—a truly sublime passion for goodness, beauty, chivalry, and self-sacrifice. And it was this centre of his soul he showed to me in his solitary talks. He brought God before my eyes, and I was satisfied."

The rest of this story must be told in a few words.

Between the age of twelve and thirteen, while he was still working at Coal House Point, William Heal learned that his father had been killed in an accident. The thought of his mother, left alone with seven children, preyed upon the boy's mind. He had never told Gordon that he had run away from home, but with this present anxiety in his mind he went to his hero, told him the whole story, and asked his advice.

Gordon said at once that the boy's duty clearly lay in returning to his home. "You must take the place of your father," he said; "you must work for your mother, you must help her with your brothers and sisters, and you must be the head of the family."

Thus did soldier and child part, never to meet again.

William Heal returned to his home. He carried a testimonial that would have got him employment anywhere, and in a few days was working for a skilled tradesman. From the age of thirteen, but only by working overtime, he supported his mother and the rest of the family. The little lad, according to his strength, played the Gordon to that derelict family. In spite of this tremendous strain he

found time to read, and continued to educate himself. At the age of twenty-two, when he had seen some of his brothers and sisters out into the world, he set up in business for himself, made his way with great rapidity, and in a few years' time was able to buy the business of his old master. That business he has now developed in a very remarkable manner.

But this large and important business, which is a means of livelihood to numerous people, does not absorb the whole attention of William Heal. He is one of the most eager and faithful workers in the Brotherhood movement, and, as Gordon was, a devoted friend of the Ragged School.

A man like this, looking back to his childhood, must be haunted almost to an intolerable pitch by the thought of boys now in some such case as he himself was in forty years ago, to whom no Gordon comes in the hour which determines their lives.

If there had been no Gordon at Coal House Point, what had been the story of William Heal?

CHAPTER X

THE BISHOP OF HOXTON MARKET

To talk to his lordship is to be deafened; for in his eagerness to get his point of view into your head, if you will pardon the expression your *thick* head, he first brings his great staring eyes to within a few inches of yours, as if you had no more understanding than a member of Parliament and he knows it, and then with one of his arms whirling, his mouth at full stretch, and his eyebrows lifted and lost in a forehead corrugated with distress at your stupidity, he simply and quite honestly bawls at you.

Until you get used to him this experience of conversation with the Bishop of Hoxton Market is disconcerting; and when you have got used to him, so used to him that you love the man for the depth of his nature, for the ardour of his devotion, and for the heroism of his life, even then a very little of his terrific bawling goes a long way.

It occurred to me the last time I met him, and I have known the man now for some five or six years, that it would be an excellent device, mitigating the rigours of our conversation, to have a table between us. He knew that I was coming to Hoxton to have a talk about his life and his life's work, and I had stipulated beforehand that I should not conduct this conversation in a room crammed full of ragged children eating bread and margarine, or in a hall packed from end to end with poor old shabby mothers, wheezing out hymns in the intervals of an address by the Bishop. In the past such had been my experience.

He would receive me in a suffocating hall, drag me to the platform, face me with hundreds of smiling mothers or hundreds of grinning children, and addressing his audience in a voice of thunder he would proceed to talk *at* me, or of me, turning every now and then in my direction (he had never let go of my arm from the first moment of my arrival) to say, "Look at 'em, take a good look at 'em, bruvver; ain't they a nice lot of muvvers?—don't they look 'appy?—ain't they a credit to 'oxton? And what's done it? *What's done it, bruvver?* Gawd's love for 'em."

Wiser on this occasion I had stipulated for a room to ourselves, and once in that upstairs room with the Bishop I put him on one side of a substantial table, got dexterously to the other side before he could follow me, and was about to begin my remarks, when he rose from his chair, unfolded a grubby document which he had taken from his pocket as we mounted the stairs, and proceeded to roar at me as follows:

"Dear Mr. Harold Begbie. You are again, I understand, to be . . . ."

I stopped him.

"What in the world is this?" I cried. "For pity's sake sit down and talk like a civilised man. You are not a deputation and I am not the Lord Mayor of London with a cheque for fifty guineas under his scarlet robes. Have you no idea of the meaning of conversation?"

He waved me, shouted me down. His old face—which is a very fine face—expressed annoyance for my interruption and a fixed determination to have his own way. He told me he had taken great pains to write what he was about to read, and that after he had read it to me he would give it to me. "I'll make it a present to you, bruvver; you

shall take it away wiv you. But first of all, I'm going to read it."

So, he standing on one side of the table, I sitting deafened and submissive on the other, the dear lion-throated Bishop, his staring eyes glued to his manuscript, which was shaking in an excited hand, proceeded to shout with the greatest ferocity through his three or four sheets of foolscap.

After compliments, the manuscript, which is now in my possession, proceeds at once to his early family history, and is in these moving and characteristic words:

> Living as we did in finsbury Market we was only too Glad to have Long Alley Ragged School to go too, not only to be Taught to be Good
> But to be Given a meal and Even a Bath too
> it was Going in hungry, dirty and cold, and Hundreds of us coming out at the End of 2 hours feeling comfortable and clean all for nothing—But the Love of God that constrand the Teachers To plod on night after night. No dought my Brave mother taught us how to wash ourselfs. But no dought she was Jolly Glad that they Bathd us at the Ragged School—for with 5 Brothers and 2 Sisters and mother and father all Living in 2 rooms it would have been a Job for her.
>
> I remember the hard struggle my deaf Father had to earn Enough money to buy food for us all and how we used to Take it in Turns to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning to go to Water Lane to get 2 penny worth of bones and to be Sent off to White Street School by 8 in the morning with a half penny for our dinners which was daily spent in a half pennyworth of Biscuit dust.

we was allway hungry. Can you blame us for Trying to be Good if they would give us a meal at the Ragged I remember telling my Brave mother I was not going to Stop home their to be starved and went and asked a milkman to Let me help Him—and thus at 8 years of age I turn out to work after School hours for 2/6 a week and my breakfast and Tea.

I allway had In my mind if Ever it came In my power to prevent poor children's Lifes being as Sad as mind —I would do my Best. then at 14 I became a poor Factory boy and at 20 God opend the way through a dear old Cobbler asking me to Come and help Him keep some babys quiet while he Taught them about Jesus in our Branch Ragged School in the Vinegard Grounds Old Street and for 7 years the Lord Jesus ownd and Blessed our Effort

then He after Testing me—call me to hoxton Market which was an Inferno

Cock fighting and Gambling all day Sunday. So it was no Good Going their for an hour or Two of a night and for 4 or 5 hours on a Sunday. So with the Corropation of my wife we went to Live their and open a Ragged School and an Institute right in their midst—at 6 a.m. In the morning Till 10 p.m. at nights Thank God I know of 100 conversions of some of my Sadest Cases of clever Hoxton thiefs given their hearts to God and when my Brother Lewis Joined me heart and Soul In the work Things began to move upperward and onward—He being a wiser man than me In fact a better boy than me at School

We have Taken Larger Premises 3 Times In hoxton Market and final Bought the freehold and Intirely Payd for Our Building, and handed it over To the

The Little that is Good

Ragged School Union—*as Our parent* who never left us or foursuck us when we was poor Ragged School children.

Now let no man smile at the quaintness of this document, for that very quaintness is a tribute to the soul of as good a man as ever broke his heart over the sorrows of mankind, and, carrying this broken heart in his breast, presented a face of joy to the world. There's not a word misspelled in that document, not a sentence wobbling away unpunctuated into obscurity, not a fervent sentiment struggling to express itself there in the difficulty of written words, which does not say to us as we read—

You who have education, what do you do with it? You to whom everything has been given, what have you done for others? Behold here is a man well-up in years, who was born in wretchedness, who was always hungry as a child, who was ragged and cold, who went to work at eight years of age, who got what little book learning he could at a Ragged School, and who, earning his own livelihood, supporting a wife and family, for the love of God and out of compassion for his fellow-creatures has given his life to the poorest of the poor, the saddest of the sad, and the lowest of the low. And here he stands before you, still at this work, still smiling, still ready to laugh and jest with you, and with such a tragedy in his heart as might, could it be told, move you to tears.

"Brother John," said I at the end of the reading, and taking the document as he handed it across the table, "sit down, I beg you, for five minutes and let me question you on this exhaustive, egoistic, and shamelessly vain biography of yours which is as full of holes, let me tell you, as Peter's fishing net. Let Brother Lewis address the

Mothers; let Mr. Walter Scoles harangue the children; let Miss Renwick hand out the soup tickets; let Mr. Urry see to it that the boys with broken boots have new ones; and let somebody else attend to every other thing in the Mission, while I ask you what on earth you are driving at in this document."

He sat down, bubbling over with laughter, and shaking his head told me that I must have my little joke he supposed, but that it would be a far wiser thing to send for his brother Lewis, who is a fine scholar, a great organiser, and knows all about everything, while he, Brother John, is only an ignorant Ragged School boy, knowing nothing, *nothing*, bruvver, but that God loves him. Then, leaning across the table appealingly, and for a moment gently, he said: "But to know that, bruvver, is to know everythink, isn't it? There's nothink bigger nor greater than that—*nothink!* Gawd loves *me!*"—he placed a hand on his breast, looked inexhaustibly incredible, and repeated the personal pronoun with an infinite pity, an infinite tenderness, "*Me!*"

Presently I got him into narrative mood, and he told me for a few precious moments something of his early days.

"My first job lamed me," he said; "that's why I have to carry a stick—it isn't to look like a gentleman, bruvver; no, I've been lame since I was a nipper, and once both of me feet was crippled, but now, thank Gawd, it's only the one. How it happened was like this: I hadn't got the strength to carry the milk-pails; you see, we never had enough to eat when we were kids; you can't grow fat on biscuit dust for your dinner, can you, bruvver?—and so when I started carrying milk-pails my feet give out. I was at it from the time I was eight to the time I was fourteen. At four a.m. every morning, bruvver, I'd go and help wiv

the milk from the station to the shop; then, when we'd watered it down, I'd take it out in smaller pails, wiv the straps coiled up on the shoulder, because I was so small, coiled up so as I could lift the cans from the pavement. Yes, it was hard work, jolly hard work, but I got half a crown a week for it, and what was far more than money to my poor little stomick, *food*. I loved that master of mine. He was a good man. And when he was locked up in Whitecross Prison for debt, I worked like a little nigger to help his wife wiv the shop. He was kind to me. The work crippled me, but he was kind—that master of mine was kind and good."

"But he watered the milk."

"They all did, bruvver; and may do now for all we know. But he was kind. He had pity for me. He treated me almost as if I was his own kid. I went to him because I was hungry. Oh, but didn't I hurt my poor, brave muvver when I told her I wasn't going to stay at home to be starved—that hurt muvver cruel. But you see, I was starving; I was desperate; I had somethink in my little stomick, bruvver, what was burning me up, tearing my vitals all to pieces. And besides, I was a bit of handful when I was a kid. Oh, yes! I had a highly unruly temper. I was up wiv my fists quick. Oh, yes! I wasn't one to stand idle and endure nothink. There was a demon in me. I could be as bad as any. Oh, yes! Not like Lewis, I wasn't. No; I was a bad boy. I was a hot-tempered boy. And I had a happetite, bruvver; why, Gawd bless you, I could have swallered a house!"

He was working in a boot factory, aged twenty, when he came across the cobbler who called him to his first discipleship.

"He was a little old fellow; very quiet, he was," says

the Bishop. "He looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, looked as if you could blow him away, as if you could turn him this way or that; and yet he had a wonderful courage; a wonderful courage, that little cobbler had, and he was ready to go into the very worst places in all London to tell people of Gawd's love and forgiveness. All he wanted me for was to mind the babies, to keep 'em quiet and content, while he preached to the muvvers and favvers of Gawd's great wonderful love for 'em. I learnt a lot from that little cobbler, and I learnt a lot, too, from the Ragged School. That Ragged School *loved* me to be good. I don't say as if they had cuffed me they'd have got me to be good, for I was a proper little varmint by nature; but they loved me into it. I wasn't good at the first. Oh, no! There was Mr. Gent, the sekketary, used to come to the Ragged School sometimes; a proper swell Mr. Gent was, and, of course, we boys threw things at his hat—he wore a tall hat, and that pleased us. We used to get round a corner, wait for his hat to go by, and then—*bang, wallop!* Oh, we was naughty boys!"

"What made you a better boy?" I asked him.

"Well, twice a Sunday we went to church, in the City it was, and they give us a suit of black, new boots, and a hat once a year because we sang in the choir. We could all sing. Lewis can play the piano now. But Lewis is more of a gentleman. He was always quick at school; no learning was no trouble to him; he seemed to know what was coming—ready for it, got it directly it came; he's a real scholar—beautiful writer, beautiful speller, and a reggelar marvel with figures. But as I was saying, church give us the idea, as you might say, of goodness being proper and right. Then the Ragged School give us the idea of kindness—they made us love them because they

was so kind to us poor ragged children. And then this little cobbler getting hold of me, making me work in his mission, and my heart being tender for poor starving children, why, that give me the idea I'd help too."

"And then you went into business?"

"Been in business all my life, bruvver! Yes, after the boot factory I learned the horse-clothing business; started by threadling the needles; got on at it; saved a bit of money; started for myself, and have worked at it ever since. Why, my first Bible-class was held in my shop! Children was always coming in even when we was at work; but when work was over I'd clear the bench, get out the Bible, and there, wiv my apron still on, my sleeves still tucked up, I'd hold forth to the children about their Father in Heaven, Who loved 'em in spite of their rags, and Who didn't want 'em to be half-starved, and ragged, and dirty, and Who . . ."

"Yes, brother; but what I want to find out is this, How did you come to turn a teacher of religion?—what moved you to it?"

He shook his head, smiling. "Some gets it sudden and sharp, bruvver; they can name the day, the hour, the minute; but others—well, it grows wiv 'em, grows slowly, and then it's there before they know it. The Ragged School, Gawd bless it, made me want to be good, taught me by those dear men and women who came and was kind to us kids that love is a wonderful power (there's no greater power, is there, bruvver?), and then when the little old cobbler took me about with him into the Ragged Schools, and started our own Ragged School here in 'oxton, I dropped into the way of it. That's how it happened, bruvver. Gawd had always put it into my wicked heart to love little children. I was never hard on a kid in

my life. And I suppose it was pity for them, when I had got into the way of earning my own living, that made me start trying to see what I could do to help them. There was swarms of 'em in those days, bruvver; worse than it is now, though it's bad enough still, as you can see for yourself—swarms of 'em, all hungry, all ragged, all shivering blue-cold in winter time, and half of 'em afraid of their own favvers and their own muvvers. It was *that* drove me to it. I couldn't bear the sight of 'em. But mind you, bruvver, it was only a little that I could do till Bruvver Lewis give up his business, became our sekketary, and started to work with that big brain of his. I'd got the *heart,* bruvver, plenty of it, a big bursting heart for the poor children, but I wanted a head to put me in the right road, and to teach me. It was Sir John Kirk, Gawd bless that man, who saw my need, and who give me Bruvver Lewis to teach me, an' somethink more! Bruvver, Sir John made me *the Superintendent* of our Ragged! Yes, *me;* a poor, ignorant, Ragged School boy, wiv no learning, wiv no certificates, wiv *nothink*—he made me Superintendent. What do you think of that? Wasn't that a lift up for me? But that was just the kindness of his big heart; the real thing was getting my Bruvver Lewis to come in wiv his learning and his better manners, and his music, and all that. Oh, that was a stroke of business, that was! And now look how we've grown! Why, we're one of the biggest missions in the whole of London, with our own premises, and with new premises bought and paid for, where poor women will be taught child welfare—how to be muvvers! Isn't that grand, bruvver? And all from a little old cobbler who couldn't spell better nor what I can!"

During these last remarks the Bishop had been showing

signs of restlessness. It was evident to me that he felt himself irked by these personal reminiscences, and, like the old war-horse that he is, snorted for the real battle—which is to say, that he longed to preach.

Suddenly, rising to his feet, one hand pressing on his walking-stick, he leaned across the table, and, mistaking me for a congregation in St. Paul's Cathedral, started a tremendous oration which needed no sounding-board to roll reverberatingly down the aisles of my soul.

"People say, bruvver, What's the use of feeding poor children, What's the use of telling poor little ragged children Gawd loves 'em, and What's the use of teaching muvvers to sing hymns and come to Bible-class? They say to us, Arter all these years you've been working in the mission, what's come of it?—what difference has it made to 'oxton? Poor ignorant souls to ask such a question! Why, bruvver, the whole neighberood's changed from what it was, so that I scarcely knows it fer the same place. And isn't this the truth, bruvver, that every little child who comes to our mission, and learns what real kindness is, and feels what it is to be loved and cared for, goes back to her cellar, or her attic, or her dark room which is the home of a whole family, goes back to it, bruvver, impreggerating the whole neighberood with love? That's what I look at. It ain't only getting bad people saved, tho' we've got hundreds of 'em, and thank Gawd fer it; but it's sowing seeds of kindness and love which I look at fer changing the hearts of people and making 'oxton a Paradise. You come here: you see the little children eating a good tea, or hear 'em singing a hymn, and you say to yourself, What good does it do?—what do they understand about religion?—this ain't religion, you say, it's only philanthropy! No, bruvver! You're wrong.

Stop a minute while I tell you. Each of them poor little children gets somethink more in the mission than bread. They get somethink they don't get in their own 'ome, and don't see much of neither in the streets; *they get love.* The smile of one of our workers—why, Gawd bless my soul, that's sunshine in the little heart. They may not know it at the time, bruvver; they're too little to know anythink except the feeling of being comfortable and 'appy; but later on they thinks to theirselves, What made those kind people so kind to me?—and all the while there's kindness in their little hearts, growing there, bruvver, giving 'em new ideas, teaching 'em what love is, and making 'em want to be good. That's what love, *real* love, always does.

"What! No good, our work isn't? Why, we've got 'oxton boys fighting for England in France, what fought fer her in Gallopilly, what were our own Ragged School boys, and what were the very first to volunteer, not waiting for conscription, no fear! and what writes to my Bruvver Lewis telling him they say their prayers, sing their hymns, and trust Gawd in the midst of the battle. Take a walk through 'oxton, bruvver. What do you see? Pretty near at every street corner there's a war-shrine, wiv a few poor flowers in front of it, and wiv a long list of our 'oxton lads what have laid down their lives for the country. See the homes they come from! See the alleys they was born in! See the streets they had for their playground! What call had they to die for England, to lay down their lives for their friends? But they went, bruvver! Went in their thousands and thousands; and thousands of 'em are dead. Them war-shrines at the corner of our little black streets tell you what it means to impreggerate a neighberood with love and kindness. It ain't only us,

bruvver; I'm not saying it's only the Ragged School Mission. There are other workers for Christ in 'oxton better than me and bruvver Lewis by a jolly long chalk, and it's what they do more than what we do, and it's what Christ does more than what we all do put together, what's changed 'oxton. It's teaching poor people that someone cares for 'em. It's making little children feel what kindness is, and what love is. It's lifting up the fallen, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked; in fact, it's following in the footsteps of our Lord and Master what has given 'oxton its heart of gold."

In spite of its thunderous tones I found this sermon very moving, and as I sat there, on the other side of the table, I saw in the old man a certain beauty, even a certain glory, which I have not often seen in those who deliver academic addresses to congregations of the upper world.

This old man, thin and frail, with signs of great suffering in his face, with a look of tragedy in his big eyes, and with his shabby old clothes hanging loose upon him, has earned, by many years of service to the poorest people in London, the affectionate title of Bishop of Hoxton Market. By his own people the title has been bestowed upon him. He is of the poor, he is of the slums, he is of the ignorant, and he is of the suffering. They know his life's history. They know the dark tragedy of his domestic life. They know that every day he drinks a full cup of absolute bitterness. And they know, in spite of this torture of his heart, that every day finds him in the midst of little children, smiling and cheerful, helpful and encouraging, with the eternal message on his lips of God's love. They take him all their troubles.

He had finished his sermon, and was about to begin another, when the door opened with a rush and in bounced

little Brother Lewis, short and spectacled, neat and groomed, hoarse and hot, with a long letter in his hand.

"I've heard from Charlie," he announced. And then to me, "I wanted to get this man up to see you, but he can't come. Instead he has sent a letter. He's one of our Hoxton lads, now a police-constable in the country. A worse boy you couldn't have found; but the Ragged School got hold of him and made a real man of him. He's splendid now. One of the best. I'd like you to read his letter."

The Bishop, after speaking of this desperate Charlie for some minutes, said that he would go down to the Mission Hall and say a few words before the people departed. He shuffled off with his stick, clearing his throat in readiness for more shouting downstairs.

The letter which Brother Lewis handed to me contains the following passages:

> As you know, I was one of the ringleaders of a gang of "nice" lads before I came to your Mission for good; of course I was always in and out of the Mission as a boy (more often out than in; they wouldn't let me stop in too long as I was such a lively card), and living in a lodging-house all my life did not help me to be any better, and when I was thirteen years old, my mother was left a widow with nine of us to keep, and you can guess I had the run of the street pretty freely, and used to do things which I shouldn't like to put on paper. But, "Praise the Lord," one Sunday evening I was tempted with two of my then chums to go into the Mission and upset the meeting; I was mistaken; I couldn't do it, or I'm afraid I'd have got a thick ear, as there were all

the bandsmen sitting behind me, and so I had to set quiet and listen, and after the meeting I was collared by several of the workers, and to get rid of them I promised to come on the following Sunday; but when that Sunday came I'd been gambling all day and lost all my money (and some of my mother's too), and I had properly got the hump and was walking away from the Mission and thinking to myself, "No Mission for me to-night," but God sent one of your workers along again and he caught me up and said: Well, Charlie, old boy, that ain't the way to the Mission, and I told him I wasn't going to no Mission, and he said: Why not? Well, eventually he got me there, and as I had got no money for the box he gave me a penny to put in, and, Glory be to God, I was converted that night, and several of your workers took good care that I did not drop attending the meetings after that, as one or the other used to call for me as regularly as clockwork, and used to take me over the Mission, and after a while I used to like going. Well, I can tell you I didn't have it all honey to start with; you got me to carry the banner and march round the streets in front of the band, and I can tell you more than once I got a rotten orange thrown at me, until once the devil got hold of me and I put the banner down, and went after them and wasn't satisfied until I had given them a good *paste*-ing; but, anyway, those same chaps never threw at Charlie any more, and I believe I was well respected by them all, after they saw that I intended to stick to "our God"; but to cut a long story short, I eventually got worked into the work of the Mission very much; I was a bandsman, and on the committee of the Men's Temperance

Society, and I was also treasurer of the Sunday-school, as well as being a teacher there too; but God works in a mysterious way, &c., and the strange part was my old Sunday-school teacher, Mr. Preedy, who has had to turn me out on more than one occasion, and me being the ringleader, and when he turned your humble out it was a case of: "If Charlie goes, we all goes"; so he had to handle us very carefully, or he would find himself without a class to teach. Well, anyway, he was treasurer, and as his work carried him farther afield he had to resign his position, and I was elected by the remaining teachers and officers of the Sunday-school to fill his place as treasurer, and I think it was a funny coincidence, don't you? that I being one of his most tiresome scholars should follow him into the position of treasurer.

Then there came along my work with Mr. John, helping him at the unemployed men's breakfasts, children's breakfasts, and also in the clothing department, and in addition to all this there was about 2,000 children fed daily at the Alexandra Trust; these children had to be brought from the Mission, and for two years prior to my leaving in August, 1913, I was helping Mr. John in this work, so anyone could see that both of you made good use of me, while you had me, and I can tell you I miss the work very much here, and there is another great and important point that had it not been for your Mission and God's goodness to me I should never have met my dear wife, as she was one of your Sunday-school teachers and a worker of the Mission, and both her and myself hold the Mission very dear to our hearts, and I shall never cease praising yours and dear Mr. John's work among

the poor and needy of Hoxton, and I know there must be thousands about this great world who could bear the same testimony as myself as to the good work going on at the dear Mission at Hoxton.

Brother Lewis told me many details concerning this Hoxton Charlie, and then, raking over a number of photographs from the farther end of the table, he presented me with a manuscript account of the Mission's work during the last twelve months, and sat down at my side.

"Can any good come out of Nazareth?" he demanded. "Of course it can. Can any good come out of Hoxton? I should think it could! Now just cast your eye over this case. This boy"—he showed me the photograph of a handsome Australian soldier—"was born and bred in our Hoxton slums; came to us in rags—filthy, horrible, ignorant. And now see what he's done. We cleaned him up, gave him a proper pride in himself, led him to be one of our junior teachers and a bandsman, and then emigrated him with his brother to Australia. Immediately he got out there he started real mission work among the 'bush boys,' working as a trapper himself. He trapped kangaroos and he trapped men. A farmer out there, who was a good man, struck by this work of our lad, gave him the free run of his library and encouraged him to become a local preacher. He was studying for the ministry when the war broke out. He joined up immediately—one of the very first to be enrolled—and went off with his brother to Gallipoli. The younger brother, described by his colonel as 'the gamest youngster in the regiment,' was the first man to be killed in Gallipoli. The elder brother was wounded, but on getting better was sent to Egypt. He fought there, and then came to France. After serving

eighteen months on the Somme in the thickest of the fighting, he got his first leave for England, and came direct from the train to the Mission. He said he wanted to return thanks for earlier days. And how do you think he returned thanks? He paid over all the money which we had spent both for himself and brother to go to Australia. And that wasn't enough. He provided a great treat for two hundred of our poorest Hoxton children, the like of which he was once himself. There's gratitude for you! That's what love can do with a boy's heart. But isn't it fine? Isn't it splendid?"

Brother Lewis then told me of a visit they had lately received from "a fashionably dressed lady," who, to their immense surprise, reminded them of how years ago she had sacrificed everything to drink, and how the Mission had sought her and saved her. Since then, she related, she had toiled at the washtub, kept her children respectably, and, as she put it, with pride, had "washed both her sons into Cambridge." She is now the owner of a very prosperous boarding-house, and her two daughters are head mistresses of national schools. "She came back to poor old Hoxton," said Brother Lewis, smiling through his round spectacles, "just to thank two men who were once Ragged School boys for having hunted her soul out of ruin and saved her by love. Think of her now with two sons at Cambridge! Isn't it wonderful?"

Behind the scenes of our polite human comedy these real dramas of the soul are taking place in a grim silence, invisible to the rest of the world—dramas in which men and women, with a little love in their hearts, descend to the cellars of misery or climb to the attics of crime, there to comfort, to encourage, and to wrestle with the inward

mystery of their fellow creatures. And some of us, who know great cities intimately, may be tempted to think that the course of civilisation is largely determined by these invisible conflicts of the soul, that the hidden leaven of love is by far the greatest force in man's progress, and that to those spiritual beings who watch the evolution of humanity from higher states of being, and who perhaps share in it, to them there may be a far greater and more exceeding glory in the life of such a one as the Bishop of Hoxton Market than in the life of the beribboned statesman whose praise is in all men's mouths.

John Burt, of Hoxton Market—a battered old man, hoarse and raucous with much preaching, shabby in poverty, and ridiculous if you will in ignorance—has obeyed one-third of the greatest of all commandments, for he has loved God with all his heart; and he has obeyed the whole of the second greatest commandment, which is like unto it, for he has loved his neighbour as himself.

The little that is good hastens to immortality, and has all eternity for its fruition. The Bishop, we may be quite certain, will know how to spell before he falls prostrate at the feet of God.

CHAPTER XI

A STABLE IN SPITALFIELDS

A SMALL shabby boy, eight years of age, walked into a Ragged School in Spitalfields on the first day of its opening, and was collared by some person in authority to look after the girls' coats, where they hung on pegs in a side room. He was put upon his honour to mount guard over those ragged and musty jackets. Not one must be missing. Everybody, we may suppose, was too busy and excited to notice the child's pride in this office. He must, one would say, have had an honest look in his face.

The boy's name was Charles Montague. He lived close to the school, in Hunt Street. So far as we can know these things, only curiosity had brought him to this opening festival.

The Ragged School to which the child came was an old stable some seventy or eighty years old. Three or four noblemen were among its patrons, with baronets, ministers of religion, and civic dignitaries in great number. Never was humbler hostel so loaded with gilded and reverend patronage. We may take it as a symbol of philanthropy in the 'forties. There stood this fusty old stable in the centre of Spitalfields, as the outward and visible sign of society's interest in their fellow creatures, as an expression, too, of ecclesiasticism's idea of discipleship: boys and girls who felt miserable might stray in there, and be sure of religious instruction, on certain

occasions might be provided with an eleemosynary bun. It described itself as a Refuge.

Here is the report of what this institution had to say in 1851 about the neighbourhood in which it had set up its Refuge:

> The neighbourhood of Spitalfields has long held a prominent position among the crime-infested districts of this great metropolis; nor is its social, moral, or spiritual condition, contrasted with more favoured localities, the better for the comparison. It is such a neighbourhood which, according to recent computation, forms the seed plot of nineteen-twentieths of the metropolitan crime. It is not surprising, therefore, that poverty, degradation, and crime should have formed a fitting place for the establishment of a Ragged School.

We are informed in this report that a very evident improvement is noticeable in the children attending the school. At the same time it is honest enough to record in the language of the times such an incident as this:

> A diminutive boy of 16, having, a few Sundays since, abstracted a handkerchief from the pocket of his teacher, escaped from the school without detection; the teacher soon after becoming conscious of his loss, means were at once adopted to discover the thief, and, if possible, to secure the handkerchief. The boy was soon after brought back to the school, and even the vigilance of two experienced officers failed to discover the missing property. On the following Sabbath evening, to the surprise of all present, the mother entered the school with the boy,

and handing the stolen handkerchief to the superintendent, expressed her deep regret at the ingratitude of her son, adding that the influence of bad companions had led him to the commission of several such depredations.

And this:

A lad who for several years had more or less been connected with the school, was induced by some others to join them in a course of plunder. The day especially selected for this purpose was the occasion of the opening of the present Session of Parliament by Her Majesty. In attempting to pick the pocket of a lady near the new Houses of Parliament, two of the number were detected; the one sentenced to four months', and his more experienced and dangerous companion to nine months' imprisonment. The consciousness of his degraded position added only to the poignancy of his grief, and so affected his health that, losing all the natural buoyancy of his youth and the general vivacity and wit of which he was the subject, in three short weeks his troubles were ended, and his spirit summoned to the presence of his unerring Judge.

Charles Montague, born and bred in such a neighbourhood as this, continued to attend the Ragged School as well as the circumstances of his life would permit. But it was not always easy. To begin with, he was earning bread and butter for himself and money for his parents by working for an ironmonger in Whitechapel Road. Then the services of this stalwart eight-year-old were often required at home, where a younger sister needed somebody's

attention. But these circumstances, bad as they were, became suddenly worse. At the age of twelve the boy was bereft of both his parents, and found himself left entirely forlorn, except for a little sister who somehow or other had to be looked after and provided for.

Offers appear to have been made to help Charles Montague in this crisis by taking his sister off his hands. But blank and destitute as the future appeared, he refused to be parted from her.

The boy had a stout heart and a resolute mind. He determined that he would fulfil his duties. His wages from the ironmonger in Whitechapel Road were eight shillings a week, and on this sum he set up his housekeeping. The great problem of his sister he solved by means of a door-key. After he had risen from sleep, performed his ablutions, dressed himself, and got breakfast ready (the last duty not taking a very long time), he told his sister to be good, encouraged her to do little useful things in the room, and then, starting off for his work, turned the key in the lock.

He was devoted to this little sister, and he locked her in the dark room so that she might be safe from the contagion of the street and from all accidents till he returned from his work. They would meet for dinner, and then off he would go again, returning at nightfall to release her from captivity, to tell her all his adventures, and to surround her with his love.

At the age of fifteen and a half he was strongly moved to acquire a better education than he had been able to pick up at the Ragged School. The Ragged School had given him, boy as he was, a steadfast faith in religion, and had given him a knowledge of disinterested love and the most devoted kindness, but it had not given him

culture. And now that he was earning better wages at a lithographic printers', and had a strong desire to become a teacher in the Ragged School, he allowed himself to dream of education. Education became one of the most pressing of his needs. He felt himself to be crippled without it.

In one of the streets of that neighbourhood, now known as Vallance Road, the boy had noticed a little shabby school which was open by night as well as by day. He went there one evening and knocked at the door. A ferocious-looking gentleman opened to him, glowered down upon him, and demanded to know what he wanted.

"Please, sir," said the boy, "will you learn me to read and write, of an evening, when I've finished my work?"

The schoolmaster replied: "I don't *learn* people to read and write; I *teach* 'em."

The boy, struck by the particular correctness of this remark, and feeling an immediate respect for such a tremendous stickler, made up his mind on the spot that here was the very man for his purpose.

"How much?" he asked.

"Eighteenpence an hour," replied the pedagogue.

It was a big sum. With a sister to keep and coal so dear in winter-time, a tremendous sum. But the boy was determined. "Done," said he, and became a scholar of this mysterious schoolmaster, of whose history we should be glad to have a full relation.

To such good purpose did young Montague put his occasional eighteenpence a night, that he was very soon teaching in the Ragged School on Sunday evenings, and on Monday evenings was actually teaching other boys—not learning them—the difficulties of pothooks and hangers.

The Little that is Good

The wonderful thing about this boy was the inflexibility of his moral resolution. From his first acquaintance with the Ragged School at the age of eight he accepted the ethics of religion, and never till the day of his death doubted or questioned the moral law. If life had gone well for him we might not perhaps wonder so much at this faithfulness, even though heredity and environment were dead against it. But life did not go well for the boy; he had to work excessively hard for mere existence; he could never have been properly nourished; and many must have been his temptations to give up the struggle and do what thousands of other boys did in that destitute neighbourhood.

At the age of twenty-five he was invited to become the Honorary Superintendent of this Ragged School, which had grown by now out of a stable and into a real schoolroom. The income of the establishment at this time was under £100 a year. Forty-one years afterwards, when Charles Montague relinquished his honorary office to a devoted son, the old Ragged School had become one of the finest buildings of its kind in all London, with an income of over £3,000 a year.

The school became his passion. He had no other commanding interest in his life. For the sake of the school he pushed on in business, set up for himself as a printer, and slaved by night and by day to make that Ragged School express the idealism of his soul. If it would be an exaggeration to say that he married for the sake of the school, this, at least, is true that he married one who could help him in his work, and when children came to him brought them up in the faith of that school. It is written of him: "Charles Montague always kept to his business as a printer, often working far into the night,

and sometimes all night, in a little back room where he kept a couple of presses in his earlier days. Just earning enough to keep his family in a measure of comfort, he devoted the rest of his life to the school he loved so well. Often he would be found at two o'clock in the morning working in its interests."

He raised the funds to build all that part of this great institute which is now the Girls' Hostel, and the gymnasium, and through the generosity of a vice-president of the schools he was able to erect the Children's Country Holiday Home in Sandon. Out of a ploughed field, with the aid of two elderly men and an old pony, he filled up the furrows and laid out the grounds, while the workmen built this splendid place in the country where poor children from the institution might go year after year for happiness and health. And he led the way in all those enlargements and improvements which have now made the King Edward Institution one of the most striking and efficient buildings of the kind in all London.

Now, Charles Montague was one of the first men in this Ragged School movement to perceive the full field of its possibilities. His main emphasis was on religion, and he made religious teaching the centre of the school's activity. But his religion did not begin and end with dogmatic theology, nor did it make a hard and fast division between things sacred and things secular. With him, in sober truth, God was not only all in all, but was All. He set himself, as it were, to Christianise the whole social life of that neighbourhood; to take the threefold existence of humanity—body, mind and soul—and baptise it into the faith of Christ. It was not enough for him to teach children to say their prayers, to read the

Bible, and to recite the creeds; nor did it satisfy his soul that men and women should grudgingly pay God the compliment of saying that perhaps they did believe in Him. No, he wanted the full manhood of religion—the heart given to God, the mind given to God, the soul given to God. His vision was the vision of a great and complete democracy; that is to say, of an instructed democracy, of a prosperous democracy, and of a rejoicing democracy. He wanted a happy home-life as well as a crowded church; he wanted a healthy people as well as a moral people; and he wanted an intelligent world as well as a faithful world.

The result of this great faith is to be seen in the King Edward Institution which has now displaced the old stable. This wonderful institution, I am told, has never once been in debt, and never has a single penny been spent on its management.

> It has been run by business men on common sense lines. . . . All its blocks of buildings are freehold and paid for. It touches every phase of the life of the poor of the East End of London from the cradle to the grave. . . . It never advertises in the religious or daily Press, but it is well-known to many business men in the City who generously support it; their Majesties the King and Queen give it their patronage and financial support, its workers come from Kew Gardens on one side and Goodmayes on the other, and the teachers in the Senior Department of the school have put in an average service of over twenty years each. And to-day ladies of title and culture are glad to work under its auspices, going about in modest uniform into the houses of the poor every day

and *all* day, without fee or reward, trying to educate the women of the district in Infant Welfare.

Of all the Ragged Schools I have visited in London the King Edward Institution impresses me most of all in the way of *completeness*. You may find an equal devotion elsewhere, you may find just as great an activity, but I do not think you find in quite the same measure the realisation of the immense importance of a complete religion. By this I mean that here in the King Edward Institution it is recognised that man is body, mind, and spirit, and that his development must be a threefold development. His body must be healthy, his mind must be intelligent, his spirit must hunger and thirst after righteousness. To this end he must be educated, and his education must not have for its goal either a prosperous career or an unimaginative respectability; it must be an education making for God's trinity of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. He must learn because he loves to learn, because his mind, if it be not always in the act of growth, will become hardened and closed, and because health of body and soul depends in no small degree on the health of the mind. Therefore he must be surrounded so far as possible by fair and beautiful things. If a monument is to be put up it must be a beautiful monument, perfect even to the important detail of its lettering. If a new building is to be added, it must be a beautiful building, with pleasure for the eye, satisfaction for the mind, and rest for the soul. If flowers can be got, every room should be glad with them. If music is to be given, let it be the best and most uplifting.

Because of this spirit, I find in the King Edward Institution a sense of joy, which is a different thing from

cheerfulness. Cheerfulness is a great and useful thing, but it is only a step on the road to joy. You can have cheerfulness in foul courts, and in old schoolrooms which once were stables, and it may help men and women to bear their hard lot, and it may serve in a most powerful way to counteract dangerous conditions; but it can never transfigure the face of life. Indeed it may be a dangerous thing. Its very patience and courage tend to perpetuate conditions against which the soul of man would do better to rise in flat mutiny. But joy transforms and transfigures. It is only born of the soul which is conscious of no frustration, which feels itself ever in the act of growth, and whose development in the knowledge and love of God is as simple and unforced as a flower's opening to the sun. Joy is not only life, it is life more abundantly.

To the neighbourhood of Bethnal Green Charles Montague bequeathed—and his faithful son, Mr. Henry Montague, who is now the Honorary Superintendent of the King Edward Institution, has enlarged the legacy—a new spirit in religious philanthropy. The Institution now covers almost every phase of life; it teaches mother-craft, it has clubs for men and boys, a hostel for working-girls, a Country Holiday Home, a Home for old people, a gymnasium, a bugle band, a brass band, a string band, swimming, cricket, and football clubs, classes for instruction in arts and crafts, a benevolent society, a system of district visiting, free circulating libraries, a troop of boy scouts, a girls' life-saving brigade, sick and provident clubs, savings banks, and I know not how many more branches of social work all radiating from the one centre of religious enthusiasm. And Mr. Montague tells me that he works with the greatest amity and in the happiest co-

operation with all the clergy of the district, including his immediate neighbours, who are Roman Catholics.

To find such a spirit at work in a neighbourhood like Spitalfields is the hopefullest sign of our times. We have tried to get along shabbily and from hand-to-mouth in this great concernment of religion, but we find that it will not do. The old religion is losing ground. Churches and chapels, particularly in the poor quarters of cities, are deserted, almost left derelict. Ministers of religion, themselves half-starved, and few of them realising what that command means that God, Who is Truth, must be loved with the *mind* as well as with the heart and soul, are in despair; the most successful of them touch only a fringe of their huge parishes: the materialistic masses are indifferent to them; and many of them, isolated from the world, break their hearts. But here is encouragement. Religion, when it realises that, like the Sabbath, it was made for man and not man for religion, when it understands that life cannot be broken up into fragments, or the nature of man treated as if it were only the emotional, draws to itself the loyalty of the world. A little Ragged School boy has led the great Churches. And here in East London is at once his monument and our encouragement.

CHAPTER XII

THE MARRIAGE CURTAIN

MRS. R. is tall and thin, with a small head, and a long neck which is extremely active and elastic. Her body, which generally assumes a crouching posture, may remain quiescent for a long period, but this long neck is never at rest for a minute or two together. She looks as if she is always ready for a spring—as if her head will suddenly shoot forward and bump you between the eyes. Consonant with this neck is the swiftness and stabbing character of her speech. Her words seem to dart at you.

She has brown eyes and wears steel-rimmed spectacles with glasses unnecessarily large. There is a tendency to tearfulness in these eyes. At the corners of her nostrils and round the edges of her lips appears an inflamed redness. For the rest, her small and almost unwrinkled face is a sorrowful grey, like the colour of her hair. It is a mournful face till she smiles.

As to her manner of dressing, she is almost the last word in respectability, with just a consciousness here and there of the demands of fashion. She looks, if I may say so, like a lady of the outer suburbs who has diligently pursued the road of social convention. You would say of her: She is good, but she is not happy.

When you hear her story you may revise this judgment and say, She is not happy because she is not sufficiently good. But you will agree, I think, that she has suffered; and perhaps you will agree, too, that she is as

good as her temperament will allow. None of us are good. We are only trying to be good. As for the goodness of Mrs. R., would that I might be certain of such a measure of virtue were my soul ever to be tried in a like furnace.

This story of Mrs. R. is extremely valuable, apart from its simple interest. It opens a door for us which is of all our social doors the one reformers least bother to glance in at when it stands ajar, and never trouble to force when it is closed, though from behind it comes often enough a sound of weeping. I mean the door of the working-man's wife, the door of the mother of British democracy. It also lifts the marriage curtain.[1]

"It's nineteen years ago," she said to me, "that I left Mr. R., and I hope I may never see him again."

"Why did you leave him?"

"For the sake of my children."

"How many children?"

"Eight. Six of them sons. Of course, I had them quick enough. One after another. No rest for me; of course not! The youngest was three months old when I left Mr. R."

"And where is your husband now?"

"Oh, he's still knocking about somewhere. He lives mostly in lodging-houses. He comes hanging about sometimes, so people tell me. But I'll never see him again."

"Was he so bad?"

"Bad's not the word for it."

[1] "It is perhaps inevitable that the mother should have been publicly overlooked, for the isolation of women in married life has, up to now, prevented any common expression of their needs. They have been hidden behind the curtain which falls after marriage, the curtain which women are now themselves raising."—"Maternity: Letters from Working Women." George Bell and Sons.

"Drink?"

"Yes, the drink. His mother was so drunk that she never remembers him being born; they never told me that; it was kept from him too; but we've suffered for it since. Oh my, but haven't we suffered, me and the children!"

"What was the final thing that made you leave him?"

"He came home one Saturday night with sixpence out of his money, which was two pounds seven shillings and fivepence that week. He'd kept us starving for the week, mind you. It was only my work fed the children. And he handed that sixpence to me, rolling and pitching about the place, and he says, 'That's all I've got for you this week.' I looks at him. I thought of my children. I thought of the little baby three months old in his cot. And I thought of myself too, wore out with work and worry. And I says to him, 'Keep it!' I says: 'Do what you like with it; I'll not touch a penny of it.' And the answer he made to me was to laugh. He laughs, goes out, and treats a sweep with that last sixpence."

"What was he?"

"A furniture packer. He could earn good money when he chose. And when I married him he was a professing Christian. He used to teach in a Sunday-school. He was a religious man and a teetotaller. But I suppose the drink was in his blood. He became the worst man that ever I've known. You would hardly credit what that man would do for drink. He'd take the boots off the children's feet—and them crying for food. He'd pull the clothes off the bed, wintertime and all. I've known him pawn his own clothes, so that I've had to work a whole week to get them out for him. There was nothing he wouldn't do for the drink. He'd no conscience. Me and

the children might starve. Me and the children might be cold. That didn't matter to him. He'd leave us with no food and no coals, not a bit of firing in the house, not a scrap of food for the children, and with three pounds in his pocket go off to the public and drink himself penniless. Oh, how he made us suffer, that man! Then the day when he came home with the sixpence, I said to myself, Why should I slave to keep a lazy drunken husband? I'll keep my children, I said, they shall never want while I've flesh on my bones, but I'll have no more of this drunken brute's cruelties—let him keep himself. That's what I said, *Let him keep himself.* And so I went to the magistrate. It was the first time in my life I'd ever been in a police-court, but I felt that the Lord would help me. I'd done my best, and now there was nothing for it but the law. I got my separation, and an order for twelve shillings a week. That was what the law did for me. I had the eight children to keep, and he was to pay me twelve shillings a week. For one month I got that money, twelve shillings a week. But I had to go and stand outside the public till he chose to come out and give it to me. There was I working my fingers to the bone for the sake of my children, and come Saturday I'd have to go and hunt their father in the public, and then ask him for my money. Of course, it pleased him to keep me standing there as long as he liked. And the words he'd speak to me! After a month I gave it up. He never sent me another shilling. From that day on I supported my children myself."

"How did you do that?"

"Ah, you may well ask!"

"It must have been a struggle."

Tears came into her eyes. "It's a wonder to me, look-

ing back," she managed to say, swallowing her sobs, "how ever I managed to do it. I don't say I couldn't have got them bread, and lived anyhow, but to bring them up all good and respectable—well, it's fair to say I could never have done it by myself. I did any work I could get—washing, nursing, box-making, all sorts. I went and hunted for it. There was no work I wouldn't do for the children. I didn't care what it was. Of course, we didn't have much to eat. And sometimes I was a bit behindhand with the rent. But we kept ourselves respectable. We never let any of the neighbours know what we suffered. And thank God we had love in the house. Ah, it would have been a bitter fight but for that! It was only because we loved each other that we managed to pull through. The children loved their mother, loved each other, and as for me there wasn't one of the eight dearer to me than any of the others. I couldn't part with them. There wasn't a single one of them I could have spared. And you ought to have seen the way those children helped each other, and helped me too, *studying* to help their mother. I never had no fear about leaving the baby when I went out to work; it was dreadful to me having to leave any of them, but I never had no fear about baby. Why, they was all fathers and mothers to baby, even the littlest of them! And I never had no fear neither about the boys getting into mischief. We lived in a poor street, and there was plenty of bad people all round us, but we kept ourselves to ourselves, and my boys was good by nature."

"You had to work out, and yet at the same time look after the home?"

"And I can truly say this, my home was always clean and respectable. Of course, the children helped me. They was always ready to help their mother. But natur-

ally the hard work, like scrubbing and cleaning, fell upon me. Then I had their mending to do. For shabby they might be, but none of my children was ever ragged. And then there was the washing, for I kept all my children clean. What with the scrubbing, the mending, the washing, and the cooking, I didn't have no idle time on my hands. But we was all happy. The children did what they could to help; they knowed that we had to keep up appearances; and they was grateful because they'd got no lazy drunken father to frighten them out of their poor little lives. Oh, we was very happy directly we'd got rid of Mr. R., but it was hard work, and no mistake, to keep things going, even in the small way we did."

"You didn't move away when you left your husband?"

"No, we kept on in the same house."

"What sort of a house?"

"The rent was six-and-six down and six-and-six up."

"You mean——"

"Thirteen shillings a week was the full rent, but we let off the top. It cost me six-and-six each week for the landlord. My eldest girl was earning eight or ten shillings a week. That helped me a lot. Of course it was a struggle. I knew it would be that. But I wasn't frightened. And even the struggle at its worst couldn't down my spirits. You see, it was peace and quietness, and happiness, with the children. Once I'd got rid of Mr. R., we had ourselves to ourselves. There was no horrors. Sometimes we were very hungry, and wanted for coals, but there was no horrors."

She gave me a very vivid idea of the pride with which poor people in a desperate situation will guard their poverty.

"None of the neighbours," she said, "ever knowed what I was going through. There was not one of them that I ever nodded to. I was never one for stopping about to gossip or for standing in my doorway gaping about at other people. No, I'd come in and shut my door and mind my own business, so that nobody never knowed whether I was worth a pound or a penny. For twenty-one years in that street I kept myself to myself, never had no conversation with any of my neighbours, and was a stranger to them. Of course, everybody knowed Mr. R., him flaring up and coming drunk up the street. Oh, they all knowed him right enough! But me and the children we kept ourselves to ourselves. Why, one winter night I was coming home, and just under the lamp in our street (and it was only a little bit of a street) I met a woman I'd spoken to once or twice in the Mission. She saw me, and stopped. 'I never knowed,' she said, 'that you lived here!' And she and me had been living in that little street for nearly twenty years. So that shows you how proper pride can keep a family's troubles to itself. There was never one of the neighbours that knowed whether I was worth a pound or a penny—not one—and I lived there for twenty-one long years."

"Some of them might have helped you?"

"I was never one for that. Besides, they was all poor, and most of them suffering."

"But neighbourly sympathy, and neighbourly kindness?"

"It's better to keep yourself to yourself in them neighbourhoods. I don't say I wasn't helped. I was helped by the Ragged School Mission. But for the Mission I could never have brought up my family respectable. They helped me all through. There was garments for the

children. There was the Fresh Air Fund to give them a holiday. There was the Sunday-school, where they learnt religion. There was the Band of Hope, where they signed the pledge, had teas, and lantern entertainments. And there was the band for the boys. None of my children ever went wrong, nor ever gave me a moment's worry—excepting once. I must tell you about that."

She became vivid and dramatic. "One evening," she said, "I was sitting at home, waiting for my boy what's in the Navy. No better son in the world than him. Handsome, strong, good, and smart into the bargain. Oh, he's well up in the service—a warrant officer now. It was months since I'd seen him. There I sat waiting for him, the tea ready, and my thoughts with the old days when he was one of the little ones, and I had to work so bitter hard for the lot of them. Suddenly the door opens. He lurches in. His cap's over his eyes. He's grinning drunk, and stumbles against the table, rolls across the floor, and drops sudden into a chair—all of a heap. My heart come into my mouth. 'Oh, Alf!' I cried, 'that I should ever live to see you like this!' 'Don't take on, mother,' he said, 'it's only because London beer is stronger than Portsmouth. I can stand twenty-four pints of the Portsmouth,' he says, 'but twelve of the London has knocked me over. Oh lor',' he moans, 'I do feel so bad.' I stood looking at him feeling as if my heart would break. He looks up, sees me, and all of a sudden jumps up, flings his arms round me, and bursts out laughing. 'Why, mother,' he says, 'I was only acting; you don't think,' he says, 'I should ever get drunk?' I clung hold of him, he'd frightened me so, and I says to him: 'Alf, promise me you'll never enter a public-house as long as ever you live.' 'I can't promise that,' he answers.

And then he says to me, 'Why, mother, I go into as many as twenty pubs a day.' My blood went cold. 'You go into twenty pubs a day!' I cried. 'Yes,' he says, 'and never get drunk.' 'But one day you'll be tempted to drink.' 'No,' he says, 'nothing will ever make me touch a drop of spirits or a glass of beer.' 'Keep out of the publics,' I says, 'if you value your soul.' 'Mother,' he says, 'it's because I value the souls of other chaps that I go into pubs.' And then he told me the truth. He goes into as many as twenty publics in a single day to get men in the Navy to sign Aggie Weston's pledge. That's my son Alf! But the fright he give me! As long as I live I shall never forget it."

She told me about the devotion of her children.

"Every one of them has turned out well. I can thank God for eight good children. We love each other as much as ever we did, though separated. Each of my sons, with families of their own, allows me so much money a week, and they're proud of keeping their old mother. Sometimes when I go and see them, the little ones all cuddling up to their granny, it makes me feel unhappy taking so much of their money. I say to them, 'I'm not too old to work; it will be better if I go out and do a bit.' And the son will say to me, 'If you do, I'll stop your money.' They can't bear the thought that I should do a stitch now. They say I've done my share bringing them up. They want me to take a long rest. It's part of their pride to keep me in idleness. Often they talk of the old days. They know what a struggle I had. They know how I'd cry when I hadn't got food for them. And they know I always did my best to bring them up respectable. That's what they remember. I taught them to say their prayers. I took them to the Mission. And I made them feel that

they'd rather die than let any of the neighbours know what we were suffering."

"How do they feel towards their father?"

"None of his sons will own him."

"They aren't sorry for him?"

"No; they say that if he couldn't work to keep them when they were little, he don't deserve to be kept by them now that they've got children of their own."

"And you agree with them?"

"Yes, I do."

"You'll never forgive him?"

"Not if he was the biggest saint on earth could I live with that man again."

"The memory of him is so bitter?"

"I can never forget what he made us suffer."

"And you see him occasionally?"

"No, I never see him."

"Well, hear about him?"

"Oh, he comes cadging about sometimes in the old neighbourhood, so they tell me; but I've moved away now this long time. He'll never get nothing out of me again."

"You think he is quite hopeless?"

"Yes; but, as I was saying, I couldn't bear that man about me not if he turned into the greatest saint on earth."

"We must remember that he probably got this disease from his mother. You say she was drunk at his birth."

"Oh, I don't judge him. I dare say his mother is the real culprit. God will judge them both. But I can't never forget what he made me suffer—what he made my poor little children suffer. If I was on my dying bed I could never forget that. It's no use talking about forgiveness. I say I don't judge the man. All I say is,

I can't forget what he made us suffer. And I can't. It's not natural that I should."

Those who know Mrs. R. at the Ragged School Mission which befriended her in the bitter days of her life have the very highest opinion of her virtues. They tell me that nothing could exceed the heroism and self-sacrifice of her motherhood. She was not one of the mothers who come to whine and cadge for their children. She brought them to the Mission because she was consumed with fear for their moral character. She wanted them to be good. She wanted to insure their souls—or perhaps I should say, their reputations. At the Mission, while she worked for their daily bread, these children, she felt, would learn to believe in God, would be encouraged in goodness, and would be helped to survive the tests of the slum.

This was the tiger-love of Mrs. R. And I think I can see in her face, particularly when it is hard with bitterness as she speaks about her husband, the spiritual strength of this central passion, the fierce and tremendous resolution of this fixed idea. The natural and sentimental love of mother and child did not trouble her. She was sure of that—in herself, and in her children. But on every side of that little home was a frightful world which waited to destroy the souls of men and women. All about her were bad men and bad women. The streets were full of dirty, foul-mouthed, and criminally minded children. The whole neighbourhood was morally septic. She could keep her children from starvation, keep them from the worst of winter cold; but their hearts, their minds, their souls? They had no other playground, no other world, than this world of the slums, which at every step is a world of corruption and vice, of failure and despair. And

so she turned to religion as a molested traveller turns to a policeman. The Ragged School Mission was her rock of defence, her insurance office, her kindly policeman. I do not think there has ever existed in her mind another conception of religion. I feel almost sure that the idea of forgiveness as an essential quality of the religious life has never entered her mind. She has, as it were, made use of religion.

And perhaps in such a story as this, more even than in the more beautiful story which I have called "A Voice in the Street," one may see very clearly and decisively the absolute need of such safeguarding institutions as those of the Ragged School Union. There are thousands of women in every black quarter of London's poverty who are saved from going to the devil, saved from throwing up the sponge and abandoning the great struggle for respectability, by the innocence and appealing helplessness of their children. So long as those children are dear to them they are safe. They will work their fingers to the bone for them. But let the children fall into evil companionship, let them become an irritation, a disappointment, and even, as in many cases, a menace, and these women surrender to the slum spirit.[1]

It is too much to expect of them that they should have a mystical view of religion, or that they should understand the very alphabet of Christ's spiritual teaching; civilisation has no right to make such a demand of them. They live in an environment where it is almost a miracle

[1] In that most illuminating book called "Maternity," one of the mothers, describing the difficulties of a working-woman's pregnancies, writes: "I always prepared myself to die, and I think this awful depression is common to most at this time. And when bothered by several other children, and not knowing how to make ends meet, death in some cases would be welcome if it were not the dread of the children, 'How would they get on without their mother?'"

to believe in God's existence, and where an absolute conversion is necessary before they can believe with a living faith in the divine love. To them the highest thing is respectability—and, do not let us forget, in their neighbourhoods respectability is an enormous achievement. Therefore, we must provide religion as we provide education, sanitation, and free breakfasts, expecting no spiritual idealism in our slums, but labouring rather as social reformers than disciples of Christ to help in the great slum battle for respectability. Religion plays its part there as nothing else can. It's main power is the devotion of the voluntary worker, the visible self-sacrifice and devotion of those who come to help the poor because they love greatly; and it is also a power because it's energy is directed into moral channels. Religion stands for the highest conventions of respectability. It is the moral code under Royal Patronage.

The poor struggling mother of the slums, slaving as no other woman slaves, fighting a battle such as no other woman fights, craves above everything else that her children may be given a chance to be good. She wants them to get on in the world, she wants them to be well-clothed, well-fed, and happy; but above everything else she wants them to be good. For there is no cynicism in her philosophy of life as to the rewards of virtue and the rewards of vice. Inextricably bound up with all her thoughts is the insoluble connection of happiness and prosperity with moral goodness. Help her children to be good, and she will look after the rest.

CHAPTER XIII

RAGS AND PATCHES

HERE follow seven or eight stories in brief—seven or eight out of a score which have come my way in going about the Ragged Schools of London. If the printer had space, and the reader patience, for all the stories I have heard in the last few weeks, truly this book would swell itself out to a second volume.

H. S. was born a cripple in Hackney forty-three years ago. His father was a cabinetmaker whose enthusiasm for religion made him a local preacher; his mother was also interested in religious work.

Till the age of seven, H. S. could only get about the world on a little seat fitted with wheels, using his hands to push himself along. His legs were entirely useless to him. But one night he passed through a physical crisis; seventeen fits succeeded each other in the child's body, and the result of this tremendous convulsion was that he ceased to be a cripple. "I lost all my teeth," he says, "but got the use of my legs."

His father died, and his mother, left with seven children, most of whom were sent to various orphanages, married again. The stepfather is described by H. S. as "a moral slacker." He was one of those men who cannot keep a job. "Drink," says the stepson, "was his greatest failure; but for that he was a good man, with a touch of kindness." It was his stepfather who completed the cure

of the seventeen fits. "He used to put weights on my legs, which were crooked and bowed, and then lie on them all night; he got them as straight as you now see them." These legs of H. S. are very abrupt, not of normal length, but they are almost completely straight, and he can get about on them as well as most people equipped with the normal number of leg inches.

He was sent at the age of seven to a Ragged School, and vividly remembers the impression made upon his mind, the strength given to his moral character, by the superintendent, a Mr. Butler. At the age of fourteen he left this school and became an office-boy.

He went one night out of curiosity to a drift meeting in Bow, where a converted burglar from Dr. Barnardo's Homes was speaking on religion. Something said by this ex-burglar made a deep impression on the boy's heart, reviving many poignant memories of Mr. Butler. H. S. had been guilty of pilfering in his employment, and this bad habit, which was taking possession of his nature, suddenly appeared in his eyes as something to be fought, and fought to the very death, if he would save his life. Accordingly, there and then, kneeling silently in that drift meeting, he sent a child's impassioned cry for help into the infinite, and down from the infinite came strange new strength to his spirit. He felt himself, he tells me, to be cleansed and strengthened. He went next day to his master, and made a full confession of his fault. But such a sense of freedom had come to him that he must needs share it with others, so great was his joy.

The boy began to save money. A dream had come to him that he, too, would set a little candle in some London window, a beam of kindly light, to which the unhappy might come out of the darkness of their misery. But first

of all he would have a Ragged School of his own to save boys from sin. It was for this that the boy saved his money. In course of time he was able to take a double-room in Bow, to fit it up with forms, to provide it with books, and to light it with little tin lamps hung from the walls.

There in that double-room this boy opened a Ragged School, and kept it going for many years. As he grew older he added to the school a religious mission for adults, giving particular attention to drift meetings. He always had it in his mind that someone in misery and distress might see that beam of light from his little window, and coming in from the darkness discover the Light of the World.

All this time he was working excessively hard in Thames Street as a tea-packer, denying himself nearly everything which the world counts dear, and saving money for his little mission, and for an object which had gradually formed itself in his mind—namely, that he should one day be his own master able to devote all his time to religious work.

One night there came to the double-room in Bow, drifting into the little meeting which he was holding, a girl who became converted, and now is the helpful wife of H. S. She shared all his ambitions. With her aid he has now set up for himself in business, is prospering as well as war will let him, and hopes some day to be so entirely free of worldly cares as to give all his time to the work of his little mission.

I am told that the number of boys who have passed through the hands of H. S. to successful careers is legion, and that very many people in Bow trace to that double-room of his their awakening to religious reality.

The Little that is Good

"Working amongst children keeps you young," says Miss R., who is in charge of a certain section of the Shaftesbury Society's juvenile work, and looks twenty years younger than her age. The life she has lived might well have made her look a nonogenarian.

"Father," she says, "was a brass-pole finisher, and could earn five and six pounds a week. But he was a wild man. He'd suddenly throw up his job and go off, go hopping for instance, leaving mother and us for months together. He was a terrible man for drink. It seemed to make him go mad. He'd dare anything. He'd throw everything to the winds. He didn't care what happened, so long as he was free. At last he left mother altogether. And he hasn't kept her now for over twenty years."

"What has become of him?" I asked.

"He and mother are both lying in different infirmaries. Father has got cancer in the throat. I go and see him. He never speaks about the past. He only referred to it once, telling me he used to think me mean not giving him money for drink. He just lies there now looking about him, and seldom saying a word. It's a terrible end for him. I think it makes him a bit happy to have me sitting at his side now and then."

"And your mother?"

"She had a dreadful life. When my father went away mother lived with one of my married sisters. But my brother-in-law took a dislike to her, and turned her out of doors. None of us saw her for years. She just drifted about. She lived in lodging-houses and in Army Shelters with no friend in the world. And now she's lying in an infirmary."

The pitiable condition of the children appealed to the

authorities of a local Ragged School. Miss R. was largely brought up by them and trained for domestic service. At seventeen years of age she went out as a servant to make her own way in the world; and three months after the brokers took possession of her old home. "I've never had one since," she says; adding, "of course, if you haven't got a home you long for it."

While she worked as a servant she gave her evenings out to the Ragged School which had befriended her, loving to be among the children. "It wasn't because I had nowhere else to go; it was just because I loved helping the children." Her influence over these children was observed by a watchful superintendent, and one day Miss R. was invited to give up domestic service and devote all her time to the welfare of Ragged School children. And there she is to this day, heredity having no power over her, environment only strengthening her enthusiasm, a very bright and happy spinster over forty years of age, I think, but looking little more than twenty, who is true mother to many hundreds of children.

C. J., who is a bit of a wag, claims to have two birthdays. On September 1st, 1858, he was born in Tower Street, Waterloo Road; and on December 2nd, 1892, at 47, Waldeck Buildings, Windmill Street, New Cut, he was born again. He claims the right to sign himself B.A. and M.A., signifying Born Again and Much Altered.

He is one of 300 converted cabmen, and for ten years acted as secretary to the Christian Cabmen's Association. Spurgeon said that he himself could not address the ungodly with the directness of C. J. He is the

youngest-looking man for his age I have ever seen, and one of the sprucest. His manner is eager, smiling, appealing, and whimsical. The whole appearance suggests a colour-sergeant of the old days.

At the age of ten C. J. left his home in Lambeth ("one room up and one room down") to pull a barrow for a can-maker in Clement Inn's Passage. His clients were publicans, and C. J. was given a good deal of beer on his rounds. He was always hungry, and the beer came as a relief to these pangs. He earned 4/- a week. After a year of this work, he pulled a barrow for a tin-plate worker in Fox Court, Gray's Inn Road, visiting the Cattle Market in Islington as well as shops. Then he went to a maker of ear trumpets, then to a newsagents, and then to the Mitre and Dove public-house at the corner of Old King Street, Westminster. Here he learned to cook for the lawyers who came to the Mitre and Dove for their meals from Westminster Hall.

> One special feature in this place worth noting (he writes) was the manager asked me once to whitewash the cellar out and he would give me 2/6. Well, this was a large sum for me to receive at one stroke, so I consented, and he locked me in the cellar so as not to hand anything out. Looking round I thought I should like to sample a tap or two, so before doing much whitewashing I just tried a little, and found the cellar began to move around and my pail with it. I was not long before I found myself in the pail. The manager came down, found me all wrong, and sent me home. My mother said, 'You have been drinking.' I told her, No. I tried to undo my boots, but toppled over into the fender. My father was called

up. I received a good strapping, but resolved not to have any more, so signed the pledge in 1875.

His next place of business was a wharf, then a publisher's office, then a tailor's shop, then the White Lion in Upper Thames Street, then another wharf, and then in February, 1879, he became a cabdriver. He was a singer and dancer, and added to the gaiety of the cab-rank, but refused to drink. In everything else he was as bad as the worst of them. He was greatly attracted by boxing men, loved a gamble, and longed for the applause of the music-hall stage. He used to take lessons in step-dancing down a little court called Prince's Place Yard, Lambeth. He trained, as he says, to become a nigger, and was to have been brought out at Wallis's Music Hall, Blackfriars Road. During this time his father died, his mother became converted under Moody and Sankey, and his brother "got saved under Sampson the Cornish revivalist."

> I went on in my wild career after I left home in 1882, up to every move on the board, as the saying goes, till in December, 1892, a cabdriver named Jim Painter, still living, spoke to me about God and warned me to give up sin. I was standing on the kerb in Bridge Street, Blackfriars, on the rank for the Royal Hotel, and it was about 10 o'clock in the morning. I had no rest all that day. At 12 o'clock that same night I knelt down in my scullery and asked God for Christ's sake to save me. I went out the next morning a brand new man.

He gives one example of many instances of answered prayer:

In 1894 a strike of a month's duration commenced. I

had the children to keep, and only had a halfpenny and about six slices in the house, and there was no strike pay as there was no union then; but I talked with God about it, and a gentleman called within an hour with 6/-, who had heard I was locked out. Next morning I received a letter with a 10/- order in it, with a piece of blank paper, and have never known from that day who sent it. Our missionary came the next morning and told us he had received from a lady at St. Leonards-on-Sea £50 to distribute among the saved cabmen, so I received my portion and never needed anything all that month till we went back to work.

He has been a very hard-working missionary from the first day of his conversion, still working hard as a cabman. His second marriage-day (and the story of his wife is as remarkable as his own) was, as he himself says, a day to be remembered. He thus describes it:

> Me and my wife were at the 7 o'clock prayer-meeting in the morning at Spurgeon's Tabernacle; married at 10 o'clock; down East Street, Walworth, at an open-air meeting from 11 till 12.30; Sunday-school at 2.45 till 4 o'clock; open-air meeting on the steps of the Tabernacle at 6 p.m. till 6.30; open-air meeting from 6.45 at the back till 8 o'clock; 8 till 9 back on the steps; speaking and singing at all meetings that day. Our souls were refreshed.

The story of the cabman's wife is a romance of kind words, and yet chiefly remarkable for emphasising the limitation of kindness.

Her home-life, she tells me, was fairly tolerable till she reached the age of twelve. By this time her father had drunk himself into absolute ruin, and her mother was

hopelessly in the grip of money-lenders. This family lived in Camberwell, and their home was close to a public-house at the end of Toulon Street, to which she was sent for "the cursed drink." In this public-house, without any religious or moral influence, and as a simple child suffering from the drunkenness of her father, she one day made a vow that never as long as she lived would she touch the cursed drink. This child's vow she has faithfully kept.

By going for a day's outing to Hampton Court, organised by the Fresh Air Fund, she came into contact with the Ragged School Mission in Camberwell. This led to her attending the Sunday afternoon services. But as the condition of her family grew more and more desperate, the child was reduced to such a state of poverty that she was ashamed to attend even a Ragged School. She suffered dreadfully in keeping away out of sheer shame of her clothes. At last, longing greatly for the friendliness of this Ragged School, she borrowed a blouse and a pair of boots which made the rest of her appearance seem less noticeably shabby, and so arrayed one night entered the school.

> I did not look (she says) a very desirable sort of girl, and as I was very poor I did not get much of a welcome in the class; but the keen eyes of Mr. P., the superintendent, and his kind heart just understood my position, and he called me and put me into a Miss C.'s class, and very kindly said: "Here you are; another scholar for you." I shall never forget her words. She said: "I have a motto card over the number in my class, so the Lord knew you were coming." From that evening onward I continued to

attend, and spent most of my time at the Mission. Miss C. was one of the kindest ladies I ever met with. I had not been at the Mission very long before she gave me a parcel of clothing. If she was ill and could not attend, I used to go and sit with her in her room, and have a Bible reading and prayer.

It is important to bear in mind that this young girl was not yet "converted." She was merely enjoying human kindness. Human kindness was making her hard life less difficult to support, but it was not changing her nature or giving a fresh direction to her soul. She said her prayers, read the Bible, attended services at the Mission, but she could never understand what Miss C. meant by "giving myself to God."

Troubles now began to rain upon her. The home near the public-house was broken up, the family was flung into the street, and it was a case for each member of it to shift for him or her self. The Ragged School helped this stranded girl. "I got my living," she says, "by selling hearthstone on wet days, and by cleaning doorsteps on dry days." The Ragged School gave her food tickets and helped in various ways. She puts it in rather a memorable sentence: "They gave me clothes that I lacked, food when I had none, and boots when I could not afford to buy."

She took a small room, and getting hold of one of her little brothers, who was straying about the streets, had him to live with her. She worked for this little brother, and did all in her power to keep him on the right moral road. It was only a sorry home she had made for him, although it was in Sultan Street. "It was a little room," she told me, "with just a box and two palliasses. Nothing more

than that in it. But presently I got rid of a girl friend I had picked up with to help me in the rent, and who was one for theatres and such likes, and took in one of my sisters, and there we three used to live." Sometimes the brother gave trouble, and there would be an ugly row in that ugly room. The cleaner of doorsteps, you see, was sometimes very tired and worried.

One night she was sitting with Miss C. and another teacher, Miss W., in the Ragged School. She was telling them of her troubles at home, and gave an account of how she had "corrected" her brother for naughtiness. Miss W. said to her, "But is that what Jesus would have you do?" The words pulled her up: the question haunted her; and she went home full of a disturbing strangeness in her heart. Miss C. had many times pleaded with her to surrender her will to God, and though she loved this teacher with a friendless girl's idolatry she had never been able to make this surrender; "I didn't understand what it meant," she tells me. But now she understood. In a flash it had come home to her. And that night, in the miserable room furnished with a box and two mattresses, the cleaner of doorsteps accepted Christ's great "transvaluation of values." "Not my will, but Thy will." She became a new creature. What kindness, and very great kindness had failed to do, the mysterious power of God accomplished in the twinkling of an eye.

"Miss C.," she said, "followed me up in temporals and spirituals. She sent me food when there wasn't a bit in the house, sent me clothes when I was ashamed to go out in the streets, and she loved me, prayed with me, and sang with me, till I felt the very Presence of Christ in the room. I thought I had loved her before. But now I knew different. No words can tell what she was to me.

I simply felt I couldn't live without her. I made the Mission my home."

Presently this brave cleaner of doorsteps was transformed into a young charwoman, and largely through the help of Miss C. was started upon a fairly lucrative career of housework. She was now able to present herself without shame to the Ragged School Mission; and soon she was actually taking a humble part in the teaching work of the Mission. Then came to her, when she had grown out of a first nervous diffidence into the calm selflessness of the true missionary, romance. For, taking up a little work at the Cabdrivers' Mission Hall in Walworth Road, she met the handsome and dashing cabman whose story I have just told, and after an orthodox period of courtship became his devoted wife. He has already told us how they spent the day of their wedding, and she adds to that description by saying that their married life has largely been spent in conducting "meetings in all parts of London and the country, always going together."

She is one of the quietest and demurest people you can imagine, carrying about with her, if not the heavy cross of her girlhood, at least the memory of it. To say that she is a sorrowful woman would perhaps give a false impression of her character, but certainly she has none of the laughing happiness of her husband. She conveys to me a sense of mystery. Perhaps she is overawed by the nearness of God.

At the age of ten W. B. began to work for his living. He earned three shillings a week by running all over London gathering the materials for making brushes. He was one of nine children. Throughout his life he has never had more than two months' schooling.

After a year with the brushmakers he went to an ivory-turner's establishment in Walworth, earning three shillings and sixpence a week. Before he was thirteen he had given up the ivory-turner, and was working in a skin yard. At fourteen he was apprenticed to vellum-making in this same yard; then something happened to his soul, and he stayed there for twenty years; now at the age of fifty-seven he is a partner in a prosperous parchment and vellum business.

During his boyhood he got into bad habits. He was one of thousands of boys who may still be seen any day of the week playing in the confusing jumble of sordid streets which radiate from the Elephant and Castle. His main vice was gambling. He used to get into sheds with a company of boys and play banker. On one occasion—he was then fourteen years of age—he gambled away every penny of his savings except a shilling. It came upon him that he must make an end of this folly. He played his last stake, won back what he had lost, and getting up from the group walked away never to gamble again.

This trifling incident led him to seek for some strengthening influence in his life. When he was a child of eight he had attended a Sunday-school in that same district, and the memory of what he had learned there, subconsciously, now returned to him. He made up his mind that he would go to religion for strength to help him fight his soul's battle. It is extraordinary, I think, that a boy of fourteen, whose life had been spent on the streets of London, and who had never received any education worth speaking about, should have this instinctive craving for spiritual strength. But the fact is there, and the result of his turning to religion was an entire change in his life.

The Little that is Good

From having been careless and drifting, an ordinary boy of the streets, he became serious, conscious of high ambitions and careful of his life.

Very soon after this powerful change in his life he began to work for others, and spent his Sundays almost entirely in religious work. An incident which occurred early in his manhood gave a certain individual direction to this religious work. A blind girl attending a Ragged School was given a Bible as a prize for her singing of a hymn. The girl's radiant pleasure struck W. B. He was touched by it, and interested to know what would become of it. "I followed that Bible up," says W. B. He discovered that it had made an enormous difference in the blind girl's life, and not only in hers, but in many others. Those who came to sit with the girl were asked by her to read the book, and their lives became changed by it. Then W. B. thought to himself that as he was not very educated and not very eloquent, the best thing he could do would be to make the Bible work for him. And so from that hour he became a great buyer and distributor of Bibles. He saved up his money to buy Bibles, and gave them away to the poor and unhappy. "I have given away," he says, "hundreds and hundreds of Bibles; and there are many stories attached to each one of them."

But he is not only a buyer and giver of Bibles; he is one of the most thorough readers of that great book I have ever encountered. He knows it intimately from cover to cover. "It occurred to me once," he said, "that I should make an alphabet of texts, and I found a good useful text for every letter in the alphabet except X." This alphabet of texts he had printed, and gives away with his Bibles.

Thus, obscure and humble, this man who was once an errand-boy, roughing it round the Elephant and Castle, lives a missionary's life of his own fashioning, never deserting the sad streets of his childhood, and never wearying of his work, because he is entranced by its romance. "What a single copy of the Bible can do," he tells me, "no man will ever know. It works like magic. You may give a Bible to a person and nothing may seem to come of it; but wait and watch, and you'll find that it has changed the life of somebody else you never knew, and, through him, a score of others."

In a simple and private way he tackles private cases of the hard heart. He married his wife only after he had converted her. He saw her for the first time one evening cleaning the windows of her home in a little back street; he says that he thought to himself: "A girl who'll take on a job like that after a hard day's work in a factory must be the right sort." They exchanged glances. A day or two after he scraped acquaintance with her. He found her to be splendid and delightful, but not interested in religion. His courtship became a religious siege to her soul; and, of course, early in that courtship he gave her a Bible. The end of it was that she became converted, and is now the joy and helpmeet of his life, her head not turned by the undreamt-of prosperity which has come to them.

His sister-in-law gradually came under his influence, but did not yield to his appeal for surrender. She was a fine creature, but she seemed to regard religion as make-believe; morality was all right, but religion didn't belong to this hard world. One day, however, she announced to him, much to his amazement, that she was giving up her sweetheart as he was not a converted man. "I've been

reading the Bible you gave me," she declared, "and I see what it means about not marrying with the ungodly: it means there'd be no peace or happiness in the home." He said to her, "You're right not to marry a man who isn't for God and eternal life; but he's not a bad sort; don't give him up till I've had a go at him." The girl was immensely relieved, for she loved her man very dearly. W. B. continued: "So when he came along I asked him to take a bit of a turn with me, and I had half an hour with him, jawing in the New Kent Road; and the result of that was that he saw the common sense of it and gave himself up to God; religion altered his whole life, gave him tenderness and thought for others, and now you'll not find a happier couple or a brighter home than his and my sister-in-law's." I like that simple realistic phrase of his, "jawing in the New Kent Road." These two young men, lovers of two sisters, did not, we may be sure, drop into the language of Chadband and Stiggins on that memorable occasion. They were in dead earnest. They were as simple and direct as the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

The memory of W. B.'s childhood, and the marvel of his escape, haunts him to this day. "It's awful," he says, "how boys are chucked out on the streets and left to shift for themselves. It's a wonder to me the world isn't a deal worse than it is. What chance have they got, poor little beggars? It was knowing what I went through myself that made me take up Ragged School work. There's no more useful work than getting little kiddies well on the right road before they've stumbled by accident on to the wrong road. You must give them a chance to be good, a chance to get out of the slums if they want to—and they'll want to right enough if you set their faces in

the right direction. As for my own children, I've had every one of them taught a trade, had them properly educated, and started them with religion. It's been a hard life with me from boyhood; I've never had a week's holiday in my life—not one; but I don't want it; working for others keeps a man fresh and grateful."

"Mother was a tie-maker; a good manager and saving," says Mrs. C., "and she needed to be with nine children to keep, and father not a teetotaller. Father was a clock-maker."

She is a charming little woman, very gentle and refined, with a pale face, smiling eyes, and pretty curling fair hair which is beginning to turn grey.

"We lived in Golden Lane, the old Golden Lane, which in them days was mostly courts and alleys. It was a funny place, all twists and turns, and people would keep pigs and fowls there, while as for cats and dogs, why, it was more like a menagerie. And dirty! Oh, it *was* a dirty place. In those days, too, nobody bothered about pavements and roads. And there was scarcely a gas-lamp to be seen in the back streets. People would go on dreadful, particularly on Saturday nights. There'd be screaming and fighting, and no police nor nothing. But it made a wonderful difference when Mr. Orsman came there with his costers' mission. I used to go to his Ragged School. I was in the patching class. We'd learn how to patch our clothes, and we'd tear up paper to stuff pillows with. They taught us a lot of things like that. There was a Miss Pearce came there. Oh, she was a dear, and no mistake. She was all for the philanthropic. I used to help her. I was always miserable if I wasn't allowed to help her get the teas and wash up afterwards.

I got on wonderfully well in the Sunday-school, and they made me a teacher of infants when I was fifteen. Mr. Orsman used to give me a shilling a month as a monitor, and then half a crown as senior monitor. We used to have some funny experiences. I remember one of the teachers asking a class, 'How did Joseph get out of prison?' and one of the ragged boys answering, quick as ninepence, 'He clumped the copper on the head and then run.' You couldn't help laughing!"

All this time she was helping her tie-making mother, sitting in a little dark room in a little black court off Golden Lane, folding and stitching beautiful silk scarves which elegant whiskered gentlemen in peg-top trousers fingered very complacently in the clubs of St. James's and the drawing-rooms of Mayfair.

One evening she went with a friend to the Hall of Science in Old Street to hear a lady-preacher. The curiosity which had taken them there was not rewarded; the proceedings proved dull; they came out of the hall disappointed and inclined to giggle. In the doorway stood a lady distributing tracts. Mrs. C. took one of these tracts. It was called "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." For some reason the words arrested the girl's attention. She bade good-bye to her friend as soon as possible, and got back to her home. She wanted to be alone.

"Mr. Orsman's preaching," she says, "had led me to the love of Christ, but I had never given myself up to Him. This tract told me I hadn't. It made me know very well that there was something more for me to do. It gave me a sense of my sinfulness; gave me the feeling of a need for a Saviour and Redeemer. . . ." I stopped her.

"Now, tell me," I asked, "what was your sinfulness?"

She was rather taken aback.

"So far as I can gather you were a very good girl indeed."

"Oh, but I wasn't as good as I ought to have been!"

"Are you quite sure you aren't using words which you have acquired since then? Try to tell me exactly what you went through as a girl when you read that tract. For example, were you afraid of going to hell?"

"No."

"Your sins weren't as bad as all that? You didn't think God would plunge you into eternal fire for what you had done?"

"No."

"Then what do you mean by a Saviour and Redeemer?"

She was silent.

"Did you really feel, as a young girl, that you needed a Saviour and a Redeemer?"

"What I felt," she said, after a moment or two for reflection, "was that I might become wicked if I didn't make up my mind then and there to be good."

"That's what I can understand."

"I remember feeling that my love for Christ was not a very real love if it didn't make me want to do exactly what He wished. I knew I wasn't a Christian like Mr. Orsman and Miss Pearce. And reading that tract seemed to tell me what I had to do."

"What had you to do?"

"Why, give myself up to God."

"Tell me what that means."

"Well——"

"It's a phrase, you know, and people use phrases so often that they sometimes forget what they mean. What does that phrase mean—giving oneself up to God?"

"I felt," she said, "that if I could only say *Thy will be done,* and really mean it, that I should be different. I felt this distinctly." Then she added: "Of course, people say things and don't hardly think what they're saying; but sometimes you seem to feel that you must say something very important, meaning every word of it, and then there's a change in you."

"When you gave yourself up to God, then, you made up your mind to be good; that's what it comes to?"

"Oh, but more than that; much more than that!"

"Well, what?"

"It was leaving Him to make me good. I only took my own will out of His way. It was Christ who entered my heart and gave me a new life."

That is her explanation of the mystery. And certain is it that the life she lived from the hour of her conversion has been a very selfless and beautiful life.

She worked for a long time with her mother; and after her marriage, being soon left a widow, continued to work at tie-making, supporting herself and a daughter at this ill-paid trade. Then her eyesight began to fail. She was threatened with blindness. Mr. Orsman told her that she must do as the doctor said and give up her tie-making. "But what am I to do for a living?" she asked. "Come and work for the Mission," he replied. It was as if the gates of heaven had been thrown wide open for her. So ever since that day Mrs. C. has been a mission worker,

and a part of her work lies in visiting crippled children, which is the work nearest of all to her heart. She loves going into the houses of very poor people, helping them to face their difficulties with courage, and telling them her own experience of God's mercy; but most of all she loves sitting beside some helpless crippled child pouring into that little heart the tenderness of her love and sympathy. So she has spent many long years, day after day, blissfully happy.

"And I've lived," she says proudly, "to see my own daughter the organist of Mr. Orsman's Mission."

F. W., an old Ragged School boy, is by trade a painter and paperhanger. He has undergone fourteen or fifteen operations for abscesses in the stomach and knee. For three years he had to struggle about the world on crutches. But ever since he can remember life has been hard and painful. "Dad was the breaker-up of the home," he told me. Hunger, poverty, and rags were his lot through childhood, and but for the local Ragged School he would have starved. And since those days life has been one long mischance with him. Nothing has ever gone right for long.

He came under the influence of a remarkable clergyman, Claud Eliot by name, who, as F. W. puts it, "practically killed hisself trying to get boys off the streets." This clergyman encouraged F. W. to start a boys' club in connection with the local church. His consuming passion was to save the thousands of roughs who thronged the shabby streets of his desolate parish from going to the devil in battalions. F. W., in a slower and ponderous fashion, had this same desire. He believed the boys could be saved if something was done

for them. He remembered what the Ragged School had done for him, and he said he'd give all his spare time to doing the same thing for the other boys. He, then, the old Ragged School boy of a London slum, and Claud Eliot, the Anglican vicar, founded a boys' club in Hoxton.

That club proved a very great success, in spite of financial difficulties. It had a membership of three hundred, and on the Roll of Honour are the names of some one hundred and fifty of its old members, who were amongst the first of that district to volunteer for war.

F. W. says: "Religion's got in a groove. It'll have to get out of it, that's if it wants to do anything. Plain speaking, that's the thing for 'oxton. They understand that. Stand up and tell 'em straight out what you mean. Let them have it hot and strong." He adds gloomily, "Now, the church is a sort of a sing-song; they don't understand it."

I thought it wise not to inquire too closely into his theology, or to press him in the least degree for details on the matter of "hot and strong" religion; but I gather that F. W. (who goes in for "dramatical reciting" at entertainments) is a great hand at getting hold of boys, and has exercised a really strong influence on the morals of the neighbourhood. "When I was a boy," he says, "it used to be fighting all the time; regular battles; knives, sticks, stones, belts, any blooming thing!—the Nile against Wilmer Gardens, that's what it would be in 'oxton; but all that's a wash-out now." However, he takes a gloomy view of the situation. "London's a lot better than what it used to be; but look at the way things are messed about!—look at all the money flung about and

wasted in charity! Why, with arf the money, *arf of it*, a man who knew his business could make London fit for anybody. What we want is real religion. We want people who mean what they say, and jolly well do it. It's messing about what keeps London back."

He looks a pessimist, and he is a pessimist—rough, shaggy, staring, and depressed; a man who has suffered fearfully, and has borne just about as much as he can endure. But I find him typical of many hundreds of thousands of Londoners. He keeps up a great fight with a hopeless heart.

"I wish I could get right out of London," he confided to me, "me and the missus together; we're fair tired of it."

I spoke about farm-work.

His face brightened up, he looked at me like a hungry dog. "We'd idolise that," he said eagerly.

One cold winter's day there came into the Sunday-school at Fairlight Hall, Tooting, three small children, all holding hands, and all of them ragged, dirty, and forlorn. They had strayed in there from some neighbouring street entirely on their own account. Nobody knew them. They were even strangers to the rest of the children.

A lady took charge of them, and placed the three waifs in her class, which was learning just then to sing a hymn which begins

"Jesus wants me for a sunbeam."

At the end of the lesson one of the three children was observed to be in tears. She was crying slowly, bitterly, hopelessly. The lady went to inquire the cause. The

child, whose name was Winnie, could only sob out that Jesus would *not* want her for a sunbeam. At last, being pressed for a reason for such an idea, she blurted out in a burst of grief, "Because I'm too dirty."

This incident impressed itself on the lady's mind. She made friends with Winnie, and encouraged her to come regularly to the school.

But not very long afterwards the three children disappeared, and were never again seen in that school.

One day, some time after their disappearance, a crowd on Vauxhall Bridge attracted this lady's attention, and going to see what had occurred she found to her dismay that the child Winnie had been run over by a cart. She followed to the hospital, was allowed to enter, and in this way came into contact with the parents.

These parents had given way, both of them, to drinking habits, and the state of the miserable room in which they lived was deplorable. Nothing could have exceeded the neglect of the unhappy children.

The accident to Winnie seemed to sober their parents. The child was dying, and all that was good in them asserted itself to make what atonement they could for their crimes. They would sit beside her bed broken and crushed, watching the child's dreadful sufferings, and saying nothing.

The lady spoke to them. They not only signed the pledge, but repented earnestly of their sins. She hoped and believed, but could not be certain, that they had really and truly become converted.

Shortly after Winnie's death they went out to Canada, intending to begin life over again. The lady was not certain of them. But one day, some months after their departure, she received from Canada the following letter:

Rags and Patches

Our verly dear teacher,—Toddles and I are trying to right you a really big leter hand we hops you will engoy it very much.

Toddles is 6 years old and I am 8 on Sunday. We lives in a verly prety house now, with a big big garden wes got lots and lots of prety cloths hand good things to eat and bests of all mamy stays at home all the days with us and when dady comes homes at night he tells us stories bout Jesus,—and then we go to bed. We can't got to Sunday-school so we all sits round the fire and mammy reads the bible and dady tells us storys so we think wes got a farlight hall all to our selfs. We always sing sunbeam cos we want to see Winny and mammy has brought us a real new baby we calls her Sunbeam cos wes going to take her to see Jesus when she gets a big girl. We are just going to bed good-night take lots of love an kisses.

From your to little sunbeams Toddles and Kitty.

Civilisation is not yet so beautiful a creature as we sometimes persuade ourselves; and if we go very close to her, looking without deluding pride at our creation, we shall find that her face is a scowl and that her robe is in rags. But for the patches which modest love has sewn upon that robe, the rags would fall away and we should see such stained and tattered underwear as would drive us clean back to paganism.

The patches may one day grow so many that nothing at all will be left of the rags, but by that hour civilisation will be so fair and fine that only the vesture of light will be fit for her.

In the meantime we must stick to the patches.

CHAPTER XIV

LONDON FROM HEAVEN

"I SHOULD like to see London," I said, "if only for a moment or two, as the angels see it."

"It is as much as I can do, sir," said my guide, little knowing that he himself had inspired the idea, "to see a bit of Battersea."

He is shortness itself, thickness itself, and as wide-shouldered as any Prussian drill-sergeant. He walks with his head down, his eyes on the ground, taking a slow, luxurious, ruminative step, rolling from side to side like a sailor of the old days. His head is of the largest size, and his vast clean-shaven face has little black eyes three or four sizes too small for it. He talks with extreme slowness, rolling the initial r with a long-drawn pleasure in its sound, and putting in every h with a noticeable intention that it should be indubitably there. His voice is a deep bass—the voice of the preacher—and if its richness is supplied entirely by the kindness of his heart (of which I have no doubt) I am not so sure that its mellowness is not the long effect of professional unction. He is an old-fashioned missioner.

"Now, if you will allow me, sir," he said, laying a hand upon my arm and stopping abruptly, "we will turn off *here* for a moment. I think I can show you something which you are very unlikely to see in any other part of London."

We had been walking beside one of the railway em-

bankments which run through Battersea, not on pavements but on the actual soil of London, and now we had come to an open space with a broken-down pair of doors preventing further progress. My guide pushed open one of these doors, and I followed at his heels into a new world.

This new world was called Somebody's Yard, and covered perhaps a third of an acre of very uneven, very hard, and very dirty London clay. It was divided from the rest of London by almost every kind of obstacle except a hedge or a wall; here was an arrangement of posts and rails; there a few dangling wires from lopsided stakes; there something that had once been a paling; there a yard or two of wire netting; there a number of packing-cases stacked one upon another; and, finally, the embankment of the railway. For fresh air I should say there is no corner of London so salubrious, but of such conveniences of civilisation as street lamps, pavements, and policemen, no corner so destitute. The character of this Yard lies in the fact that it is neither town nor country. Goodness knows what it is.

The object that first attracted my attention when I followed my guide through the broken doors was an ancient tram-car standing in one corner of the Yard with a number of very cross-bred fowls gathered desolately at its entrance. This tram-car informed all and sundry that it was once dragged between Finsbury Park and Seven Sisters Road; but no lettering was required to tell anyone that it had long ago given up the battle against electric power. It was a faded, blistered, derelict of a tram, and had been standing horseless in its present position for I know not how many years.

There were many other objects in this Yard, including

gypsy vans, gypsies, children, dogs, pigeons, goats, washing hung on lines, potato patches, cabbage stalks, singing birds in cages hung at the back of vans with bright brass bands round their lower wires, and enormous dust-heaps, smoking and smouldering in a sulky manner characteristic of the gypsy temperament.

My guide, apparently addressing himself to the Yard in general, announced in pulpit tones, full of unction and kindness, that there would be a magic-lantern entertainment that night "down at the *H*all," that the *h*our was seven o'clock, and that he *h*oped all would come. A coffee-coloured male gypsy, with both hands in his trouser pockets, and a pipe in the centre of his thin mouth, inquired lugubriously if there was to be a feed for the kids fust of all. On learning that there would be no such entertainment on the present occasion, he asked if admission would be free, and seemed to wait for the answer as if he didn't intend to be took in by no soft soap from nobody. "Admission," said my guide, with a beneficence which was like a burst of sunshine, "will be entirely free," a statement which seemed to put new life into the fowls, to satisfy the goats, and to make every pink-toed pigeon wonder if it shouldn't rookety-coo, but which produced no effect whatever on the tall waistcoated gypsy with a dark scarf round his neck, which was knotted rather wantonly under his left ear. He did, however, lift one of his great hands from the horizontal flap of his trouser pocket, remove his pipe, and expectorate sideways; but in a moment or two he was back in his old posture. "All right," he said, "p'r'aps some on us will look in, Mr. ——" I'm as good as certain the man is a Positivist.

There was another male gypsy in the Yard, very old and very wise-looking, who stood on a dust-heap waiting

for my guide to catch sight of him; and when that happened his thousands of wrinkles at once broke up into the radiance of a smile, his little foxy eyes glittered with delight, and he stretched out a gratified hand to the advancing missioner, muttering his pleasure at the encounter. They were old friends.

I addressed myself to a young lady reading a penny novelette on the back of the tram, inquiring if I might be allowed to look inside the vehicle. She seemed extremely doubtful if I might, remarking that "the gentleman was away." Some six or seven hatless, untidy, and dirty, but not ragged and not unhappy, children, who had now surrounded me, egged the girl on to let me enter the tram; but looking over their heads she seemed to take counsel of the various brown-faced, fat-armed gypsy females standing in the doorway of the vans, who were pretending not to be interested in my doings. Whether they said Yes or No, I cannot say, but very reluctantly the slipshod young creature allowed me to take a look inside.

"Why," I exclaimed to her, standing in the doorway, "such a home as this would be worth any amount of money to a general in France!"

"It's all right," she admitted.

All right!

Let me attempt to paint this interior. To begin with, you must imagine a remarkable brightness as though the sun is shining into all the windows at once; and a remarkable cleanliness, as though the washing had come home that very morning; and a remarkable cheerfulness, as though every object in the tram was immensely well pleased with itself. That is the atmosphere, the total effect of this tram interior. As regards details, there is a

high ship's bed stretched across the tram at its far end, with two snowy pillows, side by side, clean sheets neatly folded back, and a gay chintz quilt spread across it. Under this tall bed are two dark cupboards in which I suspect the children of the family to curl up very cheerfully for a long and stuffy sleep. Over the bed is a railed shelf, with just room enough between its upper surface and the curved roof of the tram for some five brass candlesticks and three or four pieces of Chelsea china, whether genuine or not I do not know, but mostly dogs.

The perforated curved wooden seat along one side of the tram is just as it was in the old days when horses with bells to their collars pulled it up to Seven Sisters Road—ten people could sit there without crushing; but on the opposite side the seat has been cut clean away in the middle to admit a kitchen range, the chimney of which disappears into the ceiling and reappears on the roof outside. Now, it is a fact that although a strong and savoury smell came from this stove, accompanied by much sizzling and bubbling, a smell undoubtedly of steak and onions, showing that the family's dinner was in course of preparation, nevertheless there was not a single sign in the whole vehicle from one end to the other of disarray. The thing was neatness itself—a trifle hot, but clean, bright, comfortable, and cheerful; incomparably a finer dwelling than any of the slum houses I had visited that morning.

The Somebody who owns this Yard charges the gypsies and vanmen so much rent for their occupation of it in winter months. What becomes of the tram in summer I did not ascertain.

I learned from my guide that gypsy children come to the Hall now and again, and that gypsy men are occa-

sionally induced to be present at an entertainment not rigorously or exclusively religious. What they think about religion he is too delicately minded a man to inquire, and he fears, too, that any pressing of the point might lead them to forbid the attendance of the children. But he is inclined to think that they believe in God, that they reckon on some sort of immortality, and that on the whole they are an honest and a generous people. "One thing about them," he says, with conviction, "which I greatly admire is their self-respect. They are clean, and they are sober; they take a pride in their *h*omes, and they are becoming more and more particular about their children. I regard them all as my parishioners."

He spoke with great affection of these children. "They come to our *H*all," said he, rolling out the words and smiling all over his parsonic countenance, "as if it were a new world for them. They play with children who live in *h*ouses. They sing our *h*ymns. They join in our little prayers. And yet you can see through it all that the mites know themselves to be different. They never truly mix with the rest. And when the spring comes they go away. I know some *h*undreds of them. They are dear children."

The Hall of which he spoke is a Ragged School Mission, and belongs to a day as old as the Finsbury Park tram. It is a survival of Victorian philanthropy, which always seems to have started off with a contempt for architecture and a certain amount of suspicion concerning beauty in any shape or form. It is horribly ugly, depressing, gloomy, and very inefficient. Nevertheless, in this forbidding old Hall two or three generations of poor children, with a sprinkling of gypsies in winter-time, have found almost the heaven of their childish dreams.

The Little that is Good

They have played here, sung here, blown themselves out here, and here encountered wonderful kindness, wonderful love.

In the big room of this Hall I noticed a dilapidated rocking-horse in one of the corners, and over the mantelpiece the text, hard to realise in Battersea, "The Earth is Full of Thy Riches."

To my guide this ugly, sordid, poverty-stricken Hall is the centre of his life. He has loved it for many long years. He has gathered into it generation after generation of children, whose hearts he has endeavoured to fill with his own overflowing faith that the earth is indeed full of God's riches; and he has gathered into it also the humble and lowly people in that unlovely and most untidy neighbourhood who believe that God cares for them even if the Churches don't, and to these he has given comfort and strength according to his power.

"I love the place, sir; and I love the people," he said to me. "I'm not as young as I was; in fact, I'm one of the oldest Ragged School missioners; but I couldn't bear to retire. I feel myself bound up with old Battersea! I can do something to *help* the dear people. I've got a number of crippled children whom I visit, and you've no idea what pleasure you can give to a poor crippled child by just dropping in for a little chat. Then there are the mothers—the *heroic* mothers of working-men; splendid women, sir; it's a privilege to be their *friend*. Ah, indeed it is! And we see wonderful, indeed miraculous changes—conversions, sir, real conversions, in our little simple services. God *has* blessed the work. Ah, indeed, *He has*, sir. There's no doubt of that."

"And you never lose heart?"

"Oh, never lose *heart*, sir; but I will tell you what I

have found just of late—a sign of age perhaps: it is that I can exhaust myself every day by giving sympathy. It takes more out of me, cheering people up, sir, than it used to do."

As different as you can imagine is Fairlight Hall in Tooting from the shabby old Hall in Battersea. Here we have the contemporary Shaftesbury Society, here we have philanthropy up-to-date, here we have religion arm-in-arm with science and social reform.

But you say to me, What on earth has the Ragged School Union to do with Tooting, which is surely the last word in respectable suburbanism? And this remark of yours, if you will allow me to say so, proves how impossible it is for any Londoner to see his city whole. Tooting, my dear sir; Tooting, my dear madam; why, you have there one of the worst slums in London—not an old picturesque slum of East London, with nice little low houses, and all sorts of dramatic twistings and turnings, where life has at least a chance of variety; but a brand-new, red-brick, monotonous slum of the modern jerry builder's conception, where life, if it doesn't perish in infancy of pneumonia caught from trickling walls in houses without damp-courses, must perish, you would say, in middle-age of spiritual ennui. A part of Tooting, I assure you, is a slum.[1]

It came about in this way. When the civic reformer looked at Clare Market, and dreaming of Kingsway and Aldwych, said that all those little courts and alleys should

[1] Charles Booth speaks of Tooting in "Life and Labour in London" (Vol. VI., p. 106), describing its "deplorable conditions," and saying that without some strong counteracting social and moral influences "it is bound to sink to lower and lower levels." He speaks of "houses of the worst character that can possibly be passed by the most lenient inspector," and of the people as the offscourings from the central parts o London.

be swept from the face of the earth, he made no provision for the poor people who lived there. This was the opportunity of the speculative builder. The reformer got his Kingsway, and the speculative builder got his Tooting. Up went the hideous villas, street after street of them, shoving the last relics of a rural Tooting out of their scarlet way, and thither flocked the poor people dispossessed of Clare Market, never more surprised in their lives to find such knobby houses awaiting them. Two families would squash into one of these villas, and at first it must have seemed to the children that a magic wand had been passed over their lives. But when the damp came through the gaudy wallpaper, and the cracking plaster began to show mildew, and the mortar between the machine-made bricks crumbled into sand, and the horrid window-sashes jammed, and the chimneys smoked, and when the children snuffled and sneezed and coughed all the livelong day, and couldn't sleep at night for the difficulty of breathing, and finally died of lung trouble, then those poor people looked back to their rabbit warren of foul little courts in Clare Market with sadness and regret.

Now, it chanced that a young gentleman connected with the Board of Guardians in the Seven Dials district, who was a very enthusiastic honorary worker in the Ragged School Union, hearing how some of his old friends were placed in Tooting, went down there, saw the dreadful condition of things, rushed off hot-foot to Sir John Kirk, and with that wise director of the Shaftesbury Society laid immediate plans for a Ragged School Mission in the midst of this brand-new London slum.

And the result is Fairlight Hall—a large, cheerful, and efficient institution, with no end of class-rooms, and offices, with every apparatus for instruction and amusement, and

with one great big hall capable of seating hundreds of people; it is the cheerfullest place imaginable—in any case, by far and away the most cheerful place in Tooting. And here the young gentleman who was once in the service of the Board of Guardians, and who for some years now has been the life and soul of this suburban Mission on the extreme edge of London, has grown a little grey in working with all his might and main for the physical, moral, and spiritual welfare of that new slum.

He is thin and eager, with spectacled keen eyes, a high complexion, a brown moustache, an utterance which is like an express train, and a very happy giggle which is constantly breaking up his speech. He rushes about here, there, and everywhere. At one moment he is fighting landlords, at the next he is challenging the medical officer of health, at the next he is praying with a dying child, at the next he is addressing a troop of Boy Scouts, at the next he is organising a bazaar, at the next he is preaching to a large congregation, at the next he is comforting and consoling two mothers in the same house, both of whom have lost children that very day, and at the next he is doubling and trebling the attendance of married women and babies at his weekly meeting of Children's Welfare.

But for Fairlight Hall, heaven knows what would become of Tooting. And when I say Fairlight Hall I don't mean the bricks and mortar. I mean this thrusting, lean, eager, and enthusiastic superintendent, I mean the scores of benevolent ladies who for the love of God come and work there from the neighbouring suburbs, and I mean the very able lady doctor who comes there to examine hundreds of babies and to tell mothers how they should feed them, and I mean the band of splendid City men who come there after office hours, night after night, to organise

the boys and lads, to encourage arts and crafts, to address the men, and to see that the financial side of their most successful Mission is always in excellent order. No more cheering and encouraging Mission is to be found in all London.

In the early days of the last century, a Huguenot silk-manufacturer named Duthoit, having compassion on the poor weavers of Spitalfields, started in that neighbourhood a Ragged School, in which he himself taught and preached. A City gentleman who has worked in that Ragged School for nearly sixty years, and who was quoted by the late Mr. H. D. Traill in "The New Fiction" as a witness to his charge that Mr. Morrison's famous book "A Child of the Jago" was exaggerated, has shown me an album presented to old Mr. Duthoit by the teachers and scholars of this school, which is a record of the Mission's most successful history.

There are charming water-colour sketches in this album, showing the old raftered class-rooms with the sun streaming through latticed windows on ragged and bare-foot children; and some very notable if modest engravings which were used on the old posters and programmes of the Ragged School. Even the pledge-cards are preserved, and tickets of admission to entertainments, and bills announcing country excursions for the children. In the midst of all these relics are some fine examples of penmanship which record the history of the institution, or give the memories of the oldest teachers.

This City gentleman, who has taught in the night schools four times a week nearly all his life, and who has given up his Sundays to the work, is a hard-headed man of business, white-haired, and bearded, with an energy of

mind which I should think was inexhaustible and a directness of speech exceedingly useful to anybody in a hurry.

He said to me that "A Child of the Jago" gave a totally false impression of that neighbourhood. It was bad in the old days, but never so bad as Mr. Morrison painted it. "He ignored altogether," said he, "the work of Mr. Duthoit. We were feeding children there for twenty-five years before the London County Council took it over. Hundreds of people there had money in the Post Office Savings Bank. Our Sunday-school was crowded, as many as 1,400 children on a Sunday night. And there were many honest, virtuous, and religious people in the neighbourhood. In fact, like every other part of London the Jago was made up of good people and bad people. It was by no manner of means a den of thieves. I myself know many men who now hold responsible positions in the City who were born in the Jago, and who found their way out."

He admitted that the housing was bad, that the poverty was very great, and that some of the children were as rough specimens as you would find in all London. "We had many tussles in the school," said he, smiling; "fights between scholars and teachers, a bird suddenly let fly in the midst of a lesson, gas turned off at the meter, chairs thrown in the air, and things of that sort. More than half our scholars came barefoot. But there was splendid stuff among them, and the Nichol Street Ragged School got hold of that splendid stuff, and changed the spirit of the neighbourhood."

"It's different now?" I asked.

"You'd never know it for the same place."

"Sir John Kirk has had a great hand in changing London."

The Little that is Good

"Sir John Kirk," said he, "is a part of the history of England."

Such is the opinion of this level-headed man of business who started teaching in a Jago Ragged School during the 'sixties, and who declares with conviction that the Shaftesbury Society has changed the face of London. I was impressed by that remark, "Sir John Kirk is a part of the history of England." It makes one wonder whether newspapers have got hold of the true standard for judging human value.

As everybody knows, there are vast areas of London which so far as bricks and mortar are concerned take the steam out of optimism and leave the most audacious courage without a word to say for itself. They are not slums in the accepted sense of that word, nor have they any of those distinctive characteristics which mark the London suburbs with a certain respectable monotony. They are, as their inhabitants would say, betwixt and between: neither city nor suburbs; neither proper nor improper; neither hot nor cold; neither one thing nor the other. Their one prevailing note is depression. They are down in the mouth. They have lost heart. They are pessimists.

Of all these melancholy acres spreading far and wide between the City and its suburbs, none ever strikes me as quite so mournful and quite so disheartening as Walworth. On a fine day it is bad enough, but on a bitter black day, with the wind in the east, it is the dismallest place in London, which is as much as to say the most rueful place in the whole world.

You can walk through miles and miles of narrow treeless streets, where every house is built of the same

funereal grey stucco, has the same number of trying steep steps to its hideous narrow front door, which is fitted with frosted glass panels, has the same precipitate dark basement, the same number of cast-iron railings, the same number of cheap window-frames, and the same number of squat grey chimneys. These streets are not exactly dark. The air that blows there is of a slate colour; you seem to feel it pressing up against you and dirtying the clean linen of your soul. You find it difficult to breathe, impossible to smile.

Every now and then you escape from this desolating depression, where you seldom encounter a living soul or catch sight of any human face at the window, and come upon a street of old Walworth cottages, with little gardens in front of them, fenced off from the pavement. And here you find crowds of children and scores of women (many of them carrying beer-jugs from the public-house at the corner) and get a feeling that life moves, that things happen, and that to live in Walworth is after all not quite so dismal as the jerry-builder would make it. And then, leaving these little streets, you come suddenly upon a main road leading to Camberwell, which strikes you immediately as the shabbiest, dreariest, and most untidy thoroughfare you ever saw in your life—a thoroughfare from which one class of Londoners made a rapid flight at the first signs of invasion by another class. And that is the chief characteristic of Walworth—it is a neighbourhood which has witnessed an exodus and suffered an invasion.

The houses in this broad street have a certain pleasantness, even a certain dignity; they stand well back from the road, with gardens in front of them, and once upon a time must have presented a very happy and contented face to

the traveller on his way to the City. But the pleasantness and dignity of their lines are almost obliterated now by the very simple process of neglect. The merchants who once lived there and to whom pride in their fine houses was a part of the joy of life, have long since run away from vulgarising influences; those who now dwell in those old houses are either too poor for paint or too indifferent to care what becomes of them. Here and there a doctor keeps up appearances and shows what proper pride can do with a Walworth house; but for the most part the dejected road has been given over to lodging-house keepers, tradesmen, needle-women, teachers of the pianoforte, and keepers of a registry office for servants. There is something in Walworth which crushes the spirit of men and darkens the face of life.

And yet, walking through these funereal streets one Sunday afternoon, I had as my companion an official of the Ragged School Union whose soul not only survived the local gloom, but positively radiated a cosmical serenity. If he has one fault it is an unconquerable conviction that everything's all right. This gentleman was undoubtedly cast by nature for the comic stage, and it will remain a mystery to me how he managed to escape that dreadful destiny. He is fat and well-looking, of a stocky and facetious size, his big, pink, clean-shaven, plump face, with its twinkling eyes and its jolly mouth, saturated with humour, like a bath-sponge full of water. Contentment oozes from every pore in his skin. It's a jolly world, and what's the use of fussing?

He took me that afternoon into Ragged School after Ragged School, introduced me to superintendents, who in their turn introduced me to teachers, and showed me what the Shaftesbury Society is doing to moralise these frightful

neighbourhoods of depression. The crowds of children in those schools, some of them as beautiful as angels, and most of them prettily dressed, gave me a cheerful feeling and a faint hope that their neighbourhoods would not crush them. But impressed as I was by the sight of the children crowding these schools, and interested as I was by some of the self-sacrificing superintendents and teachers, it was my fat and humorous guide who made this excursion memorable. For in between the schools, as we threaded depraved streets and made our way through crowds of dismal people, he talked to me about his pet hobby in Ragged School work, which is the Shoeblack Brigade. His devoted service covers a very wide field, but I think he cherishes the shoeblack with a particular affection, which would have commended itself to Charles Dickens.

"I know the shoeblacks of London," he would say. "Some of them are cripples. They make a fine living, and they're decent chaps, the whole lot of them. It was our Society started the idea. We taught them to keep their boot-boxes smart and natty. We gave them the sense of a corporation. You'd be surprised if you knew the pride they take in themselves. Lord Shaftesbury's their hero right enough. Every now and then we call a meeting. Sometimes it's fun and frolic. Sometimes it's religious. And the way those chaps let go is fine—does you good. They're a pretty nippy lot, I can tell you. Oh, smart! But what I like best is visiting them in their homes. Mind you, they're a prosperous lot of men. You ought to see some of their homes, regular bang-up affairs, I can tell you. And to hear them talk of what religion's done for them. Saved them from one thing or another, given them a decent trade, kept their homes going, brought up their children honest—does you good to hear them."

All this eloquence in Walworth struck me as wonderful enough, but to be inspired by shoeblacks, that was astonishing. I truly believe that my guide would lay down his life for a boot-brush. His very soul seems to be in the blacking line. I can imagine him in his sleep calling out, "Shine, sir, shine!" or beating a tattoo with the backs of imaginary boot-brushes on an imaginary boot-box, as he waits, kneeling, for a customer. Now, if angels wore shoe-leather I am perfectly certain that this gentleman's idea of Paradisial bliss would be shining up those celestial high-lows.

"Mind you," he said, "we have anxious calls now and then. Gambling's a fearful temptation. Ah, that's a fact; gambling's on the increase in London. Sometimes we have a drink case, but not often. And then, there's the children. We get appeals from the father to look after his boy, or from the mother to look after her girl. It's always to us they turn. I go down and see them in their homes; a bit of tea and a chat often does a lot of good. We generally manage to get the trouble right, somehow or another. But take them for all in all the shoeblacks of London are a jolly good sort. Real characters. Straight and sound. Jolly too. We're a happy family."

We stopped before a narrow row of houses in Wapping, a regular gully, looking down it with amazement as the narrowest tunnel of human life any of us had ever seen. Our eyes were caught by something which looked in the distance like a bridge, spanning this gully from side to side about half-way down its length.

"Let us go and see what it is," I suggested, and we entered the gully.

At one of the first houses we approached—little black,

flat-faced houses as dark as night—a woman suddenly appeared in the doorway, and affected to be leaning there wholly incurious about us and entirely interested in the opposite houses, which we now discovered to be in the process of demolition.

One of us greeted her, remarking on the remarkable narrowness of the passage or alley. "And it's worse now they're pulling down them houses," she remarked gloomily. "You can't keep the children out of them nohow. They get through the winders. And the mess they make of theirselves, and the dirt they bring into the house—it's somethink orful."

I inquired about the bridge-like structure half-way down the gully.

"They call it Oliver Cromwell's house," she replied.

We expressed surprise.

"Is it inhabited?" we asked.

"Oh, yuss. Ole Marmalade lives there. He'll show you over if you ask him."

"Old Marmalade?"

"Well, that's what we call him. His real name is one of the London parks. I forget what it is. But," brightening up, "it's something like Marmalade. Anyway, that's what we call him down here—Ole Marmalade. He's a dear old chap."

On we went. The nearer we drew to this strange house the greater became its attraction. The architecture was of a most interesting character. The bridge not only formed a room over the gully, but acted as a delightful portico to the house of which it formed, as it were, the upper storey. A few steps under this portico led up to a beautiful old door framed in a most gracious porch.

I discovered by careful questioning that this gentleman

was a clergyman, learning that his name was St. John Mildmay, and that the address of this quaint dwelling in the gully was The Gate House, King Henry's Stairs, Wapping. Father Russell of St. Alban's, Holborn, one of the most gracious and charming of men, lived for over fifty years in a little Holborn back-street, devoting himself to the poor. Perhaps it is the same with Father Mildmay—but I don't know.

As we continued our walk, one of the party who is an official of the Shaftesbury Society spoke very sensibly of the romance which is to be stumbled on at almost every turn wherever the traveller in London may bend his steps. It's there waiting for you, if only you're not in a hurry to catch a train or too deep buried in yourself. He told us many strange stories, taking us as he went along into queer little courts, some of which had a great tree in the middle, and some of which were composed of white-washed cabins such as you may see in Ireland. We saw some of the prettiest little squares to be seen in all London, and some of the most scandalous and disgraceful back-alleys to be found in the whole world. He knew many of the people in these various places, particularly the mothers of crippled children. Whenever he encountered a crippled child in the streets he stopped him and inquired his name, making a note in his pocket-book if the child was not in touch with the Ragged School Union. He did this in so agreeable a manner, and he was such a likeable, manly, and honest person, that I got him to tell me something of himself.

I learned that he is in charge of the Shaftesbury Society's organisation for giving country holidays to London children, that he was one of the first to set about this work, and that ever since he has devoted his whole

life to it. In a way, he may be called the Fresh Air Fund incarnate. He spoke with a quiet but earnest enthusiasm of this duty, comparing the difficulties of the early days with the smooth arrangements which now secure to many thousands of slum children a delightful holiday in Epping Forest.

He loves this work for the sheer joy and health it gives to children from the slums. He loves it, also, as a part of his religious and democratic idealism. He himself was born and bred in Ratcliffe, and knows very well what a child may suffer in London. He passionately desires that every child should have a fair chance to be its utmost best.

And then he said, quietly and gravely, "One serious matter of this war which few people stop to think about is the neglect which it has entailed for children. To begin with, the fathers are away, in many cases the mothers as well—making munitions. Then the teaching staff of the schools has suffered. And our work has suffered also. We have lost hundreds of our voluntary workers. The consequence is that many thousands of children are getting out of hand, are running wild in the streets. The next generation won't be so easy to manage as the last. There's a good deal of small crime going on. I hear about it, read about it, and it worries me. The lack of discipline is felt wherever you go. We shall have to redouble our efforts after the war if we are not to have a dangerous East London. But it isn't only East London. It's all over London. The slackening of discipline, the sudden removal of control, it's felt in every quarter of the town. It's a sad pity. We were getting such a splendid lot of children. Our people are working themselves almost to death to keep things going till the war ends

and the others come home; but the children are too numerous; they're more than we can manage."

This is a matter which I suppose has not entered many right honourable heads, or presented itself for serious consideration to those departments of the State which are asking eternally for fighting men. But it troubles the soul of this good and able man who knows very well that a few years in childhood may determine the careers of men and women. Educational authorities speak eloquently of educational reform; and, after the war, they tells us, we are to have an educational system worthy of our day and our nation; but does it occur to them that the children they will first have to deal with will be the children whose fathers are at the war, whose mothers are making munitions, and whose Sunday-school teachers have been taken from them? Much of it will be queer stuff for their handling.

Does it occur to us that the good conduct of our fighting men, that great and distinguishing glory of the British Armies (I say nothing of their valour, which seems to be the heritage of youth), is in vast measure due to the work of people we never hear about—to the faithful minister, to the Sunday-school teacher, to the Scoutmaster, to the conductor of a Band of Hope, to the organiser of country holidays, and to the district visitor? While the newspapers tell us nothing of these activities, all day long they are penetrating and interpenetrating the life of our great cities, giving to childhood not-only a right direction, but manful encouragement to walk steadfastly in that way. All day long, throughout the length and breadth of modern England, this great work of love and friendship, this contact of the higher with the lower, of the strong

with the weak, of the big with the little, has been silently moulding our national character and shaping our British destiny. The generation which has gone to the war is a generation of men made in great degree by the enlarged spirit of philanthropy which grew out of Lord Shaftesbury's life work, and which has steadily and increasingly inspired our politics, our religion, and our social conscience. The Christ of our London streets has been the strength and beauty of London's democracy. There is no quarter of the town to which you can go, certainly no black, dismal, and criminal quarter, where the spirit of Christ is not comforting, healing, and converting. It is impossible to imagine what London would now be but for this invisible work of the last fifty years.

How great from heaven must seem that work, and of how infinite an importance!

What a changing of places there would be in this great London if the angels suddenly descended to earth as mortality's valuers!

If we would only stop from time to time and ask ourselves what the angels think of us, ask ourselves how our lives look from heaven, we should be less likely to get our values wrong.

CHAPTER XV

SHAFTESBURY'S MANTLE RE-LINED

If the glimpses of civilisation afforded by these London tales have any instruction for the mind it is, I think, that during the last fifty years material progress has outstripped moral progress. The conditions of life are vastly improved, but life itself is not happier in anything like the same degree. The conditions of the world, we may hope, will be infinitely bettered as a result of the war, but the life of the world is not likely, we must fear, to react as it should to those happier conditions.

I venture to think that the mistake of the social reformer lies in his indifference to one very important element in man's nature. He aims at truth and goodness, but ignores beauty. He wants a moral and literate democracy, but does not bother his head about an æsthetic democracy. He expects, that is to say, to win millennium with an army of cripples, to flood the streets of Utopia with a deformed humanity.[1]

The threefold nature of man demands for its fruition a threefold development. Religious people err in company with the politician in thinking that man can accomplish his destiny with only two sides of that nature developed; nor can these sides of his nature ever be

[1] "Beauty, if it does not take precedence of utility, is certainly coeval with it; and when the first animal wants are satisfied, the æsthetic desires seek their gratification."—G. H. Lewes, "Problems of Life and Mind."

developed to their full lacking the completing development of the third. "Comparative criticism," says Lowell, "teaches us that moral and æsthetic defects are more nearly related than is commonly supposed." Goodness may be dull and forbidding; knowledge may be hard and ugly. It is the whole man who must march, and not only two-thirds of him.

Civilisation must be forced to face this great question of beauty. Everything in life, from our architecture to our morals, has suffered by the neglect of the artist. Because of that neglect, our morality ends at the half-way house of respectability, and our intellectual progress stops at the desk of the school inspector. The tradesmen of civilisation are satisfied, and their satisfaction is the proof of their incompetence. We must call in the artist.

Our main need is, surely, for a more joyous and far more beautiful life. We must give men in place of the lower interests which degrade, higher interests which enchant as well as exalt. We must make existence itself, and not the accidents of life, our adventure and our pleasure. There must be a greater sense of the grandeur of the soul; a finer and more poignant apprehension of life as a blessing. Men and women, as I have said elsewhere, are not meant to limp and crawl in the foul kennels of animalism to a dull and unprofitable morality, but to mount up with wings like eagles into a higher conception of life and up to a nobler realisation of God's infinite love. We must cultivate the whole man—body, mind, and spirit. There can be only blundering struggle and partial success until, with an equal passion, self-conscious life is directed to truth, goodness, and beauty.

The Little that is Good

Let us end this book by inquiring what part may be played by the Shaftesbury Society in leading men towards this threefold idealism.

The term Ragged Schools, always a shame to us, is now something of an anachronism. It is in these days only once in a while (thanks to the direct and indirect work of the Shaftesbury Society) that we encounter the disgracing ragged child who, in the days of our grandfathers, was a common object of the roadside. National education has swept away the need of charity schools; and this great system of national education is only one department of the State's care for its children's welfare. Parents are no longer permitted to misuse or neglect their offspring. If a child arrives at school hungry or dirty or ragged, searching inquiries are immediately set on foot and the parents called upon for an explanation.

So far at least we have moved. So far at least we have departed from the shallow and selfish individualism of our forefathers. No longer is there any need for the plea of Charles Dickens "to clear London streets of the most terrible objects they smite the sight with—myriads of little children who awfully reverse Our Saviour's words, and are not of the Kingdom of Heaven, but of the Kingdom of Hell." The children of London, even though the vast majority of them live in the vilest housing conditions, are marvellously cared for, are wonderfully bright and happy children, to speak generally are perhaps the prettiest, quickest, and cheerfullest children to be found in any city of the world. Surely, then, all that we need to do is to improve our system of national education. We have discovered the cure; let us stick to a remedy that works.

What place can there be in this modern and efficient England for Ragged Schools? The day that called them

into being has worn to nightfall. A new sun has risen. Those who set up the first Ragged Schools, could they revisit us, would not know this modern London. They began a noble work; our fathers took it up and carried it so far that it became a living and central part of the State's activity; and this great development has swept utterly out of existence the tragic cause of which those old Ragged Schools were the sympathetic effect. Not only are the children of the poor educated, but they are inspected, cared for, watched over, and guided by the modern State.

I propose to put our question to four men whose experience of the Shaftesbury Society entitles them to speak with authority, and who, moreover, are men of a sound judgment, each with marked differences in personality, each with a different training and outlook, and probably with no other common denominator between them than profound sympathy with childhood and profound loyalty to the spirit of Christianity. These four men are Mr. Frank Briant, a very competent member of the London County Council and an earnest student of sociology; Mr. Arthur Black, honorary secretary of the Shaftesbury Society, and a critical observer of philanthropic agencies; Mr. Walter Scoles, the chairman of the Society, an able man of business with great energy and a consuming enthusiasm; and, finally, Sir John Kirk, director of the Ragged School Union, with fifty years of devoted service to London children at his back, and with an almost unrivalled knowledge of child problems in his vigorous mind.

Mr. Frank Briant is what he calls a One District Man. Born in Lambeth, he has made Lambeth his home, his field of observation, and his sphere of work. Warned by the doctors thirty years ago, when he was a clerk of 18

in the Civil Service, that he could not combine business and philanthropy, he gave up his appointment, and, possessed of a sufficient income for his modest needs, devoted himself heart and soul to the social welfare of Lambeth. He has not attempted to take London, much less the world, for his parish; he has specialised in Lambeth. His headquarters are Alford House in Lambeth Walk, his own creation and one of the most vigorous Ragged Schools in London, where Sir George Paish, the economist, who has often said how much he owes to the Ragged School Union, was once a teacher, and from which he made his first actual observations of social life. On more than one occasion this eminent economist has gone on country excursions with Lambeth lads and put up with a barn for a bedroom.

Mr. Briant holds that the need for such an institution as the Shaftesbury Society is still very great, and he thinks that its policy should be enlarged to meet this need. He would have the organisation closer kit, with a greater uniformity in its procedure, and with a constantly improving class of teachers. His ambition for the Shaftesbury Society is that it should set up in every district of London such institutions as his own Alford House in Lambeth, or Fairlight Hall in Tooting, or the King Edward Institution in Spitalfields; that is to say, modern and efficient headquarters for the social and moral life of that district. He would have the workers at these headquarters as good as can be got, whether voluntary or paid, and would not tolerate the uneducated however kind of heart, or the blunderer however pious.

He recognises that this is already the tendency of the Shaftesbury Society's development, and acknowledges that it is largely lack of funds which makes that tendency lag.

He lays it down emphatically, and with a profound experience to support him, that our whole attitude towards the youth of the country should be revolutionised. In spite of everything which the State has done, he holds that present methods are to a very dangerous degree haphazard, wasteful, and inefficient. There is no thesis in those methods. The State has not set clearly before itself what it seeks to do. And philanthropy, which has come so devotedly to the State's aid, is in like case. It, too, has no thesis. Wherever you may look in all the various activities, both of the State and of philanthropy, you find an almost total lack of co-ordination and synthesis. Much is being done, but the direction is not definitely decided, and the doing is not done *together*.

"Let me take, as an example," he said, "the organisation known as Boy Scouts. Here we have an excellent idea. Nothing, indeed, could be better. At a critical time in their lives boys are given the advantage of discipline, are inspired with a manful code of morals, and come under the influence of men who are inspired by high ideals. What is lacking? Co-ordination. The Scout system is a thing *sui generis*. It has no connection with anything else. It is not allied with one single organisation which deals with children before and after leaving school. Its great defect lies in this, that the strong personal influence which is so great a factor in its usefulness almost invariably ceases when a lad reaches the very critical age of fifteen. If it was part of a complete organisation dealing with boys from the age of, say, twelve, up to full manhood, with Scoutmasters partially responsible for the whole, there would be continuity of influence. And it is this more than anything else which is wanted. A lad outgrows his taste for the uniform and

particular attractions which appeal to the dramatic instincts of a boy. Then is the time to take him by the hand and lead him into the Boys' Club, where he becomes a member of the cricket, football, tennis, and swimming clubs. These clubs, by the way, want organising and reforming; they lack variety, there is too much noise, too little concentration. From seventeen onwards he should be guided into a still higher kind of club, with intellectual as well as physical interests; and for his full manhood a better world should be prepared for him than the very ugly, selfish, and difficult world which at present awaits our London youth.

"My view is that the open spaces should be much more used than they are at present. Wherever possible bowling greens should be laid down. And there ought to be a football pitch for the playing of local matches, which would attract spectators on Saturday afternoons (wages day) and keep them out of the public-houses. In all these open spaces there should be bands, and they should play from eight to ten in the summer evenings, so as to give the men who come back from work a chance of hearing good music, while they sit at rest in a pleasant place, breathing fresh air. In winter, public baths should be boarded over, and used for band performances. The public dances which are usually held in these places might with great advantage be replaced by cheap or even free concerts. The smaller baths should be used as gymnasiums.

"Now in all this there is a tremendous chance for the Shaftesbury Society. With its great experience, its admirable organisation, and its wide field of activity, it is well fitted to set in motion the machinery of co-ordination. Few societies indeed are better placed for such work. If our policy continues to be a policy of development, then I can

see not only a great use for the Shaftesbury Society, but a position in the State of the very highest importance."

Mr. Arthur Black, who was called nearly three years ago by the Council of the Society from active service for child life in Liverpool to act as junior colleague to Sir John Kirk, is not given to demonstrative enthusiasm. He does not easily surrender a careful and critical reason to Utopian dreams. He puts the matters very succinctly in a single phrase: "The policy of the Shaftesbury Society is to work for its own extinction," meaning that so great and scandalous is the need for its services that it should work with might and with main to remove the causes of sin, suffering and most cruel poverty.

He prefers for the present to be non-committal. "It seems to me," he says, "that the future of the Shaftesbury Society will largely depend upon three things—the direction, the rapidity, and the extent of the war's effects upon both State and Church. If, for instance, the full programme of the Workers' Educational Association were carried out, along with land, housing, and temperance reform, practically the whole necessity for our philanthropic work would disappear. The place of charity would be taken by justice—a very much bigger thing than charity in its modern content. Until, however, political and municipal action gets rid of poverty and neglect in their incidence upon child life, the Society must be ready to render direct service in the shape of relief.

"I strongly feel that the Society should much more fully adopt the practice of Lord Shaftesbury, and while carrying on through its local missions and branches its evangelic ministry, should use to the utmost its power of shaping public opinion, and of securing and enforcing

legislative action. I should like to see a Social Questions section of the Council, freely studying the administration of laws affecting our poorest city children, and bringing pressure to bear where possible upon Parliament and local authorities, and combining with others to place the Will of God for child life upon the statute book of the country. That will take a generation or two, and when it comes to pass the special care of the Society would be devoted to those isolated cases of need arising from accident or moral evil.

"On the other hand, the future of the Society as a religious agency would be diminished or cut short by the re-union of the Churches and their organised and complete service for every class in the community.

"Our Missions at present form a rallying ground for Christians of all evangelical beliefs, and of those whose faith in Christ is expressed less by words than in deeds. When the Churches freely welcome all such to membership and give them wide scope for personal liberty and action, the rôle of independent Missions will disappear. A generation or two is a short time for such a transformation, unless indeed the war proves to be a startling and sudden 'Day of the Lord,' and a new age for the Church comes in with a rush.

"It seems to me, therefore, that the policy of the Society is to work for its own extinction—on the social side by the steadfast promotion of State action in securing the full birthright of every child in body, mind, and spirit; on the religious side by its witness and service for the reunion of the Churches and their consecration to the realisation of the City of God at the heart of Empire.

"But tell them it has an amazing sphere for educational

and redemptive evangelism in this overgrown and unending London."

Mr. Walter Scoles, with an energy which stirs, and an enthusiasm which kindles, refuses to think of any time in the far future when the Society's work will not be necessary. No amount of State action can do away with the personal touch—the contact of soul with soul. He loves the Society, throws himself wholeheartedly into all its energies, and sees in it an expression of Christ's love for the least of mankind.

"All our centres throughout London," he declares, "form the Church of the Poor. We look after them in Christ's name. We are everything to them, beginning with their babies and working upwards to their old age. We have centres for children, for boys and girls, for adults, and for old people. We take care of bodies and souls. I see no limit to our extension. We want more money most urgently, as much money as we can get, in order to look after more babies, more boys and girls, more men and women. Why, ten thousand branches of our work would not exhaust London's need for the healing hand of Christ. It is religion, and only religion—religion that is devoted, passionate, homely and true-ringing—which can save the millions of the people from materialism. I believe in the Shaftesbury Society with all my heart and mind and soul."

When I talked over this matter with Sir John Kirk, he began by speaking of the London he had known fifty years ago.

"Physical London," said he, "has changed so prodigiously that sometimes I'm half inclined to think that the

The Little that is Good

London I remember could not possibly have existed only a few years ago. I am thinking of the London in which few of the back streets were either paved or lighted, in which if you made your way on a winter night you did so through mud over your boots and through pitch darkness, with such smells in your nostrils as haunted you and sickened you for the best part of next day. I am thinking of the London in which costermongers stabled their donkeys in their parlour, and other people kept rabbits and fowls in their houses. I am thinking, too, of the London in which drunkenness on Saturday was so frightfully common that it only caused amusement to thoughtless people. I am thinking, too, of the London in which you could hardly go a hundred yards without encountering a dozen barefoot and ragged children, with blue faces, matted hair, and humped shoulders, the most pitiful objects you can imagine. I am thinking, too, of the London in which deformed children were made use of by professional mendicants, who exposed them to public view in the gutters, whining for alms; and not only deformed children; poor little babies two and three months old were commonly used to excite compassion on bitterly cold winter days or in drenching rain. And, finally, I am thinking of Lord Shaftesbury's London, the London in which our first Ragged Schools were crowded at night by bearded men in their rough working clothes, learning to read and write. All this London of fifty years ago, and less than fifty years ago, has passed away.

"The life of the poor has experienced a complete revolution. The children are educated, well-clothed, and properly inspected. Many of the worst slums have been cleared away. Streets are lighted and paved. Sanitation is a science. Food, as a rule, is plentiful and cheap—

take fruit, for example, once an absolute luxury to the poor; it can now be bought for a few pence all the year round. And, finally, you have a new social conscience which will not tolerate the exposure of crippled children or young babies in the streets. It's not merely the religious people; it's the man of the world who refuses now to stand that sort of thing. We've got a better standard, a more vigorous conscience. It is, practically speaking, a new London."

A little later on, sitting back in a big chair, a book which he had been reading open on his lap, his eyeglasses at the end of his nose, he asked, looking over the rims, "What do people know of London? Most of them know only a corner, and that on the surface. Ignorance of London, even among Londoners, is almost complete. The great spirit of the city which is the life and soul of England, the life and soul of the British Empire, yes, and almost the life and soul of the world's democracy, is a spirit of idealism—not dreamy and sentimental idealism, but real, practical, sound, hard-headed idealism. It is a spirit that believes in itself, that doesn't doubt things can be made better, *that makes them better,* and that has no sooner made one improvement than it sees the opportunity for two more. And it's such a wonderfully kind spirit. It's warm with humanity. There's nothing mechanical about it. It is full of cheerfulness and good-heartedness. The love that exists in London is like an ocean. Its acts of kindness and self-sacrifice are in number like the stars. And I don't care where a man goes, he'll find nowhere else on the earth a great city more essentially simple, honest, clean, and domesticated."

"But," I objected, "there's still frightful misery, frightful depravity, frightful depression."

"Yes, that's true enough."

"Then how is it you are so happy?"

"Because things are getting better."

"But only in patches?"

"You must begin with patching. You can't have a new world all at once. London may distress you and shock you, but it's a thousand times better, I assure you, than it was fifty, forty, thirty years ago."

"Were you never tempted," I asked him, "to go into Parliament and attempt to do wholesale by legislative action what——?"

He interrupted. "No; because you must create a social conscience before you can have legislative action. My humble work in the world has been the endeavour to create in one small field of national life this social conscience. In my own small way, helped by much greater and better men, I have kept the child before the public gaze. A social conscience has come into existence on this subject. Parliament acts because the child has a public opinion. Parliament is a grand name for a tool used by creative philanthropy."

"You have never lost heart in philanthropic work?"

"There's too much to cheer."

"What cheers you in particular?"

"The child. Begin with the child, and you'll never despair. Oh, a child's so responsive! And it's the hope of the future. The race is marching on the feet of little children. No child was ever yet born into this world rich or criminal. It begins good. Its spirit comes to this world fresh from the Father of Spirits. You have only got to give the normal child a reasonable chance, guiding it wisely, encouraging it affectionately, helping it at the critical moment, to get a Christian citizen. No;

begin with the child, and you'll never despair. That's the root of all reform—the heart of the child."

As to the future of the Shaftesbury Society, he said:

"There will always be a need for the Shaftesbury spirit, whatever the State may do; and, indeed, the more the State does for the individual, the greater will be the need for that spirit. I take it that you can define the faith of the Shaftesbury spirit in these words: The greatest need of the lowest is loving contact with the best. Essential to the richness of the commonwealth is this mixing of the highest and best with the lowest and the worst. Besides, it's Christlike. I think the idea which inspires the Shaftesbury spirit is well expressed in the following incident: A child, carrying a child, was observed by some sympathetic passer-by who asked, 'Isn't he heavy?' 'Not very,' was the answer, 'and, besides, he's my brother.' Can you imagine a time when that spirit will not be necessary in the State? 'Not very; and, besides, he's my brother!' The machinery of the State will produce something hard and unnatural unless this Christlike spirit is at work animating the whole national life. One thing I dread more than another is the separation of the classes. That's a danger. And it's a danger that State action tends to increase. People who live in poor quarters, and who have a hardish struggle for existence, need the humanising element of those fortunate classes who have long enjoyed the advantages of education and refinement. The more you bring all classes together, the stronger you make the State. And not only do you strengthen the State, you enrich the national life. Art, literature, science, culture in general—these things ought to be shared, like money, and food, and clothing. People give money, but they must give themselves. They must not only send food

and clothing, they must come themselves, with their refinement and knowledge. This is where I look for the future of the Shaftesbury Society. Instead of seeing it drawing into retirement as the State more and more takes up its work, I see it becoming the inspiring centre of a new national life, its emphasis always on the unity of the nation for the sake of the child."

He spoke of the Society's past, describing it as "a great absorbing organisation," and pointing out to me how many other agencies it has already absorbed into itself. The Fresh Air Fund, for example, was begun by Sir Arthur Pearson, but it is administered by the Shaftesbury Society. He described it also as "a great inspiring society," telling me how the Polytechnics had sprung from its loins, and State emigration, and industrial schools, and free breakfasts for the destitute, and country holidays for poor children, and mothers' meetings, and homes for cripples, and provident clubs of all sorts.

"Such a Society will not die," he concluded. "It is vital to the national life. It will change with the times, but its spirit will remain. There will never be a period in the world's history when the spirit of this Society will not be necessary to the health and progress of humanity, because it is the spirit of Christ. The more modern and scientific and efficient becomes the State, the more will the spirit of Christ be necessary to keep it from the self-destruction of mechanism. Love is the law of life. I look forward, after fifty years of spade work, to a future for this great Society (great in its principles, I mean) which will exceed anything that the oldest and most enthusiastic of its members ever dreamed of. It will become, in God's good providence, if it is loyal to its first principles, a bridge by which all classes in the national life may cross

and re-cross into each other's territory in the unity of spiritual brotherhood. The more men see that the child is the hope of the world, and the more they become willing for the sake of the child to sink their differences, political and religious, the more they will turn to the Shaftesbury Society for the opportunity of expressing their faith. I don't delude myself. There's a long way, perhaps a very long way, yet to go. But I'm sure of this, that a Society which is faithful, in Christ's name, to the least of His little ones, partakes of His immortality. It is His will that it should not die."

Thus spoke this simple and unaffected man, whose long life, full of a beauty never to be written, has been unobtrusively devoted to the most helpless, defenceless, and innocent of his fellow-creatures. He has worn the mantle of Lord Shaftesbury with a modesty hardly excelled by his faithfulness to the dead leader. He has never once been tempted to go in a coat of his own making. And not once, although he has re-lined that Victorian mantle in the course of time, has he been tempted to decry, belittle, much less to besmirch, the memory of his master. Others may assert that Lord Shaftesbury was a narrow-minded evangelical, or attempt to prove that he merely played the part of a political and aristocratic patron to democracy; but John Kirk asks what other man of that time lifted so many fallen, clothed so many naked, fed so many hungry—what other man of that generation ever laboured so heroically to create the Christian conscience of modern England—what other man led so many of the purest spirits of the age to give their lives for the poor and sorrowful?

It was a happy chance for the nineteenth century, if it

was a chance, that such a man should have been born to challenge the vainglorious legions of materialism, in the first heady hours of their sweeping victories, to challenge them with that eternal miracle of human life which alone saves us from the tyranny of ourselves—the spirit of self-sacrifice. And it will go ill with the present century, however great its material progress, if this spirit is not still urgent in our midst.

This is the soul of progress, that the world's democracy should be led by those who have the spiritual magic of attraction, and who prove by their moral greatness or their immeasurable love that life can be transcended. We have had enough of the journeymen of civilisation. They have given us a world which smells of the vestry. Let us make an end of this coarsening materialism. The spirit of man cries out for beauty and joy, and we can entrust the fortunes of humanity only to those who are true servants of the living God.

How shalt thou poise the courage
  That covets all things hard?
How pay the love unmeasured
  That could not brook reward?
How prompt self-loyal honour
  Supreme above desire,
That bids the strong die for the weak,
  The martyr sing in fire?

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